

THE BLACKWELL HISTORY OF THE WORLD

*A History of*  
RUSSIA, CENTRAL ASIA  
AND MONGOLIA

*VOLUME II*  
*Inner Eurasia from the*  
*Mongol Empire to Today, 1260-2000*



David Christian

WILEY Blackwell

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**RUSSIA,**  
**CENTRAL ASIA**  
**AND MONGOLIA**

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*VOLUME II: INNER EURASIA FROM THE  
MONGOL EMPIRE TO TODAY, 1260–2000*

**DAVID CHRISTIAN**

**WILEY Blackwell**

This edition first published 2018  
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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Christian, David, 1946–

A history of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia / David Christian.

p. cm. – (Blackwell History of the world)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: v. 1. Inner Eurasia from prehistory to the Mongol Empire

ISBN 978-0-631-18321-1 (hbk : alk. paper). ISBN 978-0-631-20814-3 (pbk : alk. paper)

v. 2. Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260-2000

ISBN 978-0-631-21038-2 (hbk : alk. paper). ISBN 978-0-631-21039-9 (pbk : alk. paper)

1. Former Soviet republics–History. 2. Mongolia–History. 3. Sinkiang Uighur

Autonomous Region (China)–History I. Title. II. Series.

DK40 .C49 1998

950–dc21

98–3677

Cover image: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

Cover design by Wiley

Set in 10/12pt PlantinStd by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

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# CONTENTS

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List of Figures	vii
List of Maps	xi
List of Tables	xiii
Series Editor's Preface	xv
Acknowledgments	xix
Preface: The Idea of Inner Eurasia	xxi
PART I INNER EURASIA IN THE AGRARIAN ERA: 1260–1850	1
1 Inner Eurasia in the Late Thirteenth Century: The Mongol Empire at its Height	3
2 1260–1350: Unraveling and the Building of New Polities	23
3 1350–1500: Central and Eastern Inner Eurasia	49
4 1350–1500: Western Inner Eurasia	71
5 1500–1600: Pastoralist and Oasis Societies of Inner Eurasia	97
6 1500–1600: Agrarian Societies West of the Volga	119
7 1600–1750: A Tipping Point: Building a Russian Empire	143
8 1600–1750: A Tipping Point: Central and Eastern Inner Eurasia between Russia and China	175
9 1750–1850: Evolution and Expansion of the Russian Empire	209
PART II INNER EURASIA IN THE ERA OF FOSSIL FUELS: 1850–2000	231
10 1850–1914: The Heartland: Continued Expansion and the Shock of Industrialization	233
11 1750–1900: Beyond the Heartlands: Inner Eurasian Empires, Russian and Chinese	269
12 1914–1921: Unraveling and Rebuilding	309
13 1921–1930: New Paths to Modernity	343

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## CONTENTS

---

14	1930–1950: The Stalinist Industrialization Drive and the Test of War	367
15	1900–1950: Central and Eastern Inner Eurasia	403
16	1950–1991: The Heartland: A Plateau, Decline, and Collapse	437
17	1950–1991: Beyond the Heartlands: Central and Eastern Inner Eurasia in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century	473
18	1991–2000: Building New States: General Trends and the Russian Federation	493
19	1991–2000: Building New States: Beyond the Heartlands	531
	Epilogue: After 2000: The End of Inner Eurasia?	569
	Chronology	573
	Index	605

---

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

0.1	Populations of Inner and Outer Eurasia: same area, different demography	xxviii
0.2	Largest world empires	xxix
0.3	A mobilization pump, from a Red Cross cartoon produced during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905	xxx
1.1	Global populations over 1,800 years	5
1.2	Climate change 1 CE to 2000 CE	6
1.3	Karakorum	8
1.4	Diagrammatic representation of the <i>smychka</i>	16
2.1	Photograph of part of Baldugin Sharav's painting, <i>One Day in Mongolia</i>	24
2.2	Genealogy of Chinggis Khan's family	25
3.1	Little Ice Age and the Black Death	50
3.2	Global population estimates to 1700 CE	51
3.3	Biraben: populations of Inner Eurasia, 1000 to 1700 CE	51
3.4	Biraben: populations of Outer Eurasia, 1000 to 1700 CE	52
3.5	Possible routes for the spread of bubonic plague during three pandemics, in the 6th–8th, 14th–17th, and 19th–20th centuries	52
4.1a,b	Two forms of the agrarian <i>smychka</i>	78
5.1	Erdeni Zuu Monastery today	103
6.1	Growth of Muscovy's population as a proportion of Inner Eurasia's population	123
6.2	Chart showing expansion of Russia on a logistic curve	125
6.3	Three Russian cavalrymen	131
8.1	Kiakhta today	183
8.2	Giovanni Castiglione, <i>War Against the Oirat</i>	190
10.1	Increasing energy consumption in early modern England and Wales	235
10.2	Hockey sticks: accelerating growth rates for population, life expectancy, GDP, and impacts on the climate system and biosphere	236
10.3	Increasing global energy supplies, 1850–2000	238
10.4	The Russian railway network, 1861–1913	248

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LIST OF FIGURES

---

10.5	John Hughes's home in Yuzovka	250
10.6	Chart of coal and oil production, 1859–1917	252
11.1	Vasilii Vasilievich Vereshchagin, <i>They Triumph</i> , 1872	281
11.2	Sharav's portrait of the eighth Jebtsundamba	297
14.1	Two charts showing the meaning of collectivization	371
14.2	Two charts showing total Soviet energy production, 1928–1980, and relative contribution of different fuels	379
14.3	The Soviet Union enters the fossil fuels era: coal and oil production in Russia, 1859–1987	380
14.4	Tent city, with Magnetic Mountain in the background: Magnitogorsk, winter 1930	382
15.1	Photo of Sharav's painting of Ulaanbaatar (Urga) early in the twentieth century	419
16.1	Global GDP, 1500–1998	438
16.2	Global GDP per person, 1500–1998	438
16.3	Growth in GDP per person over two millennia	439
16.4	Soviet electricity generation, 1921–1989	446
16.5	Average annual rates of growth, USSR, 1951–1985	450
16.6	Various estimates of Soviet economic growth rates (%), 1959–1991	459
16.7	Boris Yeltsin speaking from on top of a tank during the August 1991 "putsch"	467
17.1	The Mongolian national emblem changed as the country industrialized	484
17.2	Mongolian <i>ger</i>	485
18.1	Democracy and market reform in the PSIERS	499
18.2	Democracy and privatization in the PSIERS	500
18.3	The rule of law in post-Soviet countries	502
18.4	GDP as % of 1989 level in post-Soviet countries	502
18.5	GNI per capita as % of 1989 level, 1989–2000	503
18.6	GNI per capita as % of 1989 level, 1989–2008	506
18.7	Private sector as share of GDP in different groups of post-Soviet societies	507
18.8	Changing GDP in poorer post-Soviet countries as % of 1989 level	509
18.9	Gini coefficients for selected post-Soviet republics, 1988–2006	512
18.10	Tanks firing on the "White House," the home of the Russian Supreme Soviet, October 4, 1993	520
19.1	Changing GNI of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level	532
19.2	Changing GNI of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level	533
19.3	Changing GNI of Central Asian republics, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level	553

19.4	Changing GNI of Central Asian republics, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level	553
19.5	Changing GNI of Mongolia and Central Asian republics, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level	561
19.6	Changing GNI of Mongolia and Central Asian republics, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level	562



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## *LIST OF MAPS*

---

0.1	Inner and Outer Eurasia	xxii
0.2	Interiority and low rainfall	xxv
0.3	Northerliness and low agricultural productivity	xxv
0.4	Generally lower agricultural productivity than Outer Eurasia means low population density	xxvi
0.5	Major regions of Inner Eurasia	xxxiii
1.1	Abu-Lughod map of Afro-Eurasian trade circuits prior to 1500	4
1.2	The zone of ecological symbiosis	13
2.1	The Mongol Empire at its height in 1250	25
2.2	The Chagatay khanate in 1331	30
2.3	The Golden Horde during the reign of Khan Ozbeg (1313–1341)	35
6.1	Territorial expansion of Muscovy to 1598	124
6.2	Muscovy's southern frontier at the end of the sixteenth century	129
7.1	Muscovite expansion into Ukraine	160
7.2	The Belgorod line in the mid-seventeenth century	163
8.1	Russian conquest of Siberia along riverways	177
8.2	Russian expansion in Bashkiria and the Kazakh steppes, eighteenth century	196
11.1	Russian conquest of Central Asia	271
11.2	Central Asia after Russian conquest	285
17.1	Google Earth map of Mongolia	481
17.2	Google Earth map of Xinjiang	487
18.1	Google Earth map of the Russian Federation	521
19.1	Google Earth map of Ukraine	534
19.2	Google Earth map of Belarus	539
19.3	Google Earth map of Kazakhstan	543
19.4	Google Earth map of Transoxiana	544



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## *LIST OF TABLES*

---

0.1	Populations of Inner and Outer Eurasia	xxvii
14.1	Soviet fuel and energy production and consumption, 1928–1980	378
16.1	The slowdown: Soviet economic growth, 1951–1985	449
16.2	Soviet GDP: Various estimates of % rates of growth, 1951–1991	459
18.1	GNIIs of PSIERS, 1989–2008, taking 1989 as base	504
18.2	Years when transition economies reached EBRD scores of 4 for price liberalization and liberalization of foreign exchange and trade	508
18.3a,b	Gini coefficients for selected post-Soviet republics, 1988–2006	511



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## *SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE*

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There is nothing new in the attempt to grasp history as a whole. To understand how humanity began and how it has come to its present condition is one of the oldest and most universal of human needs, expressed in the religious and philosophical systems of every civilization. But only in the last few decades has it begun to appear both necessary and possible to meet that need by means of a rational and systematic appraisal of current historical knowledge. Until the middle of the nineteenth century history itself was generally treated as a subordinate branch of other fields of thought and learning – of literature, rhetoric, law, philosophy, or religion. When historians began at that time to establish its independence as a field of scholarship in its own right, with its own subject matter and its own rules and methods, they made it in practice not the attempt to achieve a comprehensive account of the human past, but the history of western Europe and of the societies created by European expansion and colonization. In laying the scholarly foundations of their discipline they also reinforced the Enlightenment's belief in the advance of "civilization" (and, more recently, of "western civilization"), and made it in this form, with relatively minor regional variations, the basis of the teaching of history almost everywhere for most of the twentieth century. Research and teaching of the histories of other parts of the world developed mainly in the context of area studies like those of ancient Greece and Rome, rooted in philology, and conducted through the exposition of the canonical texts of their respective languages.

While those approaches prevailed world history as such remained largely the province of thinkers and writers principally interested in constructing theoretical or metaphysical systems. Only towards the end of the twentieth century did the community of academic historians begin to recognize it as a proper and even urgent field for the application of their particular knowledge and skills. The inadequacy of the traditional parameters of the discipline is now widely acknowledged, and the sense is growing that a world facing a common future of headlong and potentially catastrophic transformation needs its common history. The realization of such a history has been delayed, however, by simple ignorance on the one hand – for the history of enormous stretches of space and time has until very recently been known not at all, or so patchily and superficially as not to be worth revisiting – and on the other by the lack of a



widely acceptable basis upon which to organize and discuss what is nevertheless the enormous and enormously diverse knowledge that we have.

The first of those obstacles is now being rapidly overcome. There is almost no part of the world or period of its history that is not the object of energetic and sophisticated investigation by archaeologists and historians. The expansion of the horizons of academic history since the 1980s has been dramatic. The quality and quantity of historical research and writing have risen exponentially in each decade, and the advances have been most spectacular in some of the areas previously most neglected. The academics have not failed to share the results of their labors. Reliable and accessible, often brilliant, accounts are now readily available of regions, periods, and topics that even 20 years ago were obscure to everyone but a handful of specialists. In particular, collaborative publication, in the form of volumes or sets of volumes in which teams of authors set forth, in more or less detail, their expert and up-to-date conclusions in the field of their research, has been a natural and necessary response to the growth of knowledge. Only in that way can non-specialists, at any level, be kept even approximately in touch with the constantly accelerating accumulation of information about the past.

Yet the amelioration of one problem exacerbates the other. It is truer than it has ever been that knowledge is growing and perspectives multiplying more quickly than they can be assimilated and recorded in synthetic form. We can now describe a great many more trees in a great deal more detail than we could before. It does not always follow that we have a better view of the wood. Collaboration has many strengths, but clarity, still less originality of vision, is rarely foremost among them. History acquires shape, structure, relevance – becomes, in the fashionable catchphrase, something for thinking with – by advancing and debating new suggestions about what past societies were like, how they worked and why they changed over long periods of time, how they resembled and why they differed from other societies at other times and in other parts of the world, and how they interacted with one another. Such insights, like the sympathetic understanding without which the past is dead, are almost always born of individual creativity and imagination. That is why each volume in this series embodies the work and vision of a single author. Synthesis on such a scale demands learning, resolution, and, not least, intellectual and professional courage of no ordinary degree. We have been singularly fortunate in finding scholars of great distinction who are willing to undertake it.

There is a wealth of ways in which world history can be written. The oldest and simplest view, that it is best understood as the history of contacts between peoples previously isolated from one another, from which (as some think) all change arises, is now seen to be capable of application since the earliest times. An influential alternative focuses on the tendency of economic exchange to create self-sufficient but ever expanding “worlds” which sustain successive systems of power and culture. Another seeks to understand the differences between societies and cultures, and therefore the particular character of each, by comparing the ways in which their values, social relationships, and structures of power have developed. The rapidly developing field of ecological history returns to a very ancient tradition of seeing interaction with the

physical environment, and with other animals, at the center of the human predicament, while insisting that its understanding demands an approach which is culturally, chronologically, and geographically comprehensive. More recently still "Big History," led by a contributor to this series, has begun to show how human history can be integrated with that not only of the natural, but of the cosmic environment, and better understood in consequence.

*The Blackwell History of the World* seeks not to embody any single approach, but to support them all, as it will use them all, by providing a modern, comprehensive, and accessible account of the entire human past. Each volume offers a substantial overview of a portion of world history large enough to permit, and indeed demand, the reappraisal of customary boundaries of regions, periods, and topics, and in doing so reflects the idiosyncrasies of its sources and its subjects, as well as the vision and judgment of its author. The series as a whole combines the indispensable narratives of very long-term regional development with global surveys of developments across the world, and of interaction between regions and what they have experienced in common, or visited upon one another, at particular times. Together these volumes will provide a framework in which the history of every part of the world can be viewed, and a basis upon which most aspects of human activity can be compared across both time and space. A frame offers perspective. Comparison implies respect for difference. That is the beginning of what the past has to offer the future.

R. I. Moore

### *SERIES EDITOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

The editor is grateful to all the contributors for advice and assistance on the design and contents of the series as a whole, as well as on individual volumes. Both editor and contributors wish to place on record, individually and collectively, their thanks to John Davey, formerly of Blackwell Publishing, without whose vision and enthusiasm the series could not have been initiated, and to his successor Tessa Harvey, without whose energy, skill, and diplomacy, sustained over many years, it could not have been realized.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This book has been very long in the writing, and I have accumulated many debts as I have written it. While working on it, I had positions in history departments at Macquarie University and San Diego State University, and I want to thank both departments and universities for providing friendly and collegial environments, for granting periods of sabbatical leave, and for financial support during research trips and trips to conferences. Colleagues in both universities offered innumerable suggestions, ideas, insights, and references. I also want to thank librarians at both universities for their help in finding and ordering books. I spent productive periods of research leave at the Kluge Institute of the Library of Congress, the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, the library of the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies and the British Library in London, the Russian State Library (former Lenin Library) in Moscow, the Widener Library at Harvard, the University of Sydney, and the Australian National University in Canberra. I also received a generous grant from the Australian Research Council in 2010; that gave me the time, travel, and resources needed to finish this huge project.

I owe too many debts to too many colleagues to list all individually, but I do want to thank some whose conversations over the years have provided unexpected and valuable insights. They include (in alphabetical order) Tom Allsen, Richard Bosworth, Terry Burke, Nick Doumanis, Ross Dunn, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Steven Fortescue, Graeme Gill, Geoffrey Hosking, Sasha Pavkovic, Daniel Waugh, Stephen Wheatcroft, and many, many others.

Bob Moore commissioned this entire project, and has kept a kindly eye on it over a much longer period than I care to remember. He has been immensely patient, supportive, and encouraging. I grew up in Nigeria, where my first, and perhaps best, teacher was my mother, Carol. Chardi, Joshua, and Emily have put up with this project, and the absences and research trips it involved, over many years, with love and generosity. I owe my family an immense debt for their love and support. I also want to thank my extremely able and conscientious research assistants, Mandy Kretzschmar and Lana Nadj, who helped with bibliographical research and ensured some consistency in the spelling of words and names in many different languages. My editors at Wiley Blackwell,

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Haze Humbert, Fiona Screen, and Brigitte Lee Messenger, did a superb job of ensuring stylistic consistency in a complex manuscript.

I alone am responsible for remaining errors of fact, emphasis, and logic, and for not managing to cover all of the rich scholarship on the vast territory traversed by this book.

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# PREFACE: *THE IDEA OF INNER EURASIA*

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## *THE ARGUMENT: CENTRAL THEMES*

This volume covers a vast area – the central, or “Inner” half of Eurasia – and more than 750 years of that region’s history. Writing at this scale, it is easy to overlook the contingent events, the pathways not taken. So, though my central argument is about sustained ecological and geographical pressures that shaped the region’s history in enduring ways, I have tried not to ignore the alternative histories and might-have-beens – Lenin falling under a tram in September 1917, or a Lithuanian conquest of Muscovy, or a revived Mongolian Empire in the sixteenth century.

Contingencies have shaped the writing as well as the argument of this book. In April 2016, I was in London, working in the British Library on footnotes, formatting, transliterations, and the many other obsessive details involved in finishing a manuscript, when I picked up a Russian-language newspaper, *Pul’s UK*, “Pulse UK.” Its front page advertised an article on “*Yurta v Khaigaite*,” “A Yurt in Highgate.” For an English-trained historian who lives in Australia, the phrase reeked of globalization. But it also captured something of the project I have been working on for more than two decades: a history of Inner Eurasia, a huge region whose two historical poles in the last millennium have been Mongolia and Russia. Finding a free Russian-language newspaper in London also reminded me how much more globalized today’s world is than the world I grew up in, or even the world in which I began this project. (I was reminded recently that I signed a contract for this project in 1991, the year the Soviet Union broke up; that was *before* any of the events described in this book’s last two chapters.) Later that day, I had a beer in a nearby pub, “The Rocket.” That was a serendipitous reminder of a second major theme of this volume: the fossil fuels revolution (of which steam engines were a major early component) and the way it has transformed our world, including, in rather distinctive ways, the world of Inner Eurasia.

The first volume of this history appeared in 1998.<sup>1</sup> Taken together, the two volumes tell the story of a distinctive world region that includes all of the former Soviet Union, as well as Mongolia and Chinese Xinjiang. It includes all of the inner, more northerly, more arid half of the Eurasian land mass. Inner Eurasia’s complement is “Outer Eurasia.” Outer Eurasia includes China,



**Map 0.1** Inner and Outer Eurasia. Adapted from Encarta.

South-East Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Persia, and Europe (Map 0.1). Outer Eurasia has been the subject of much more historical scholarship because it had much larger populations, more cities, and more complex societies that generated abundant historical records. To study the history of Inner Eurasia, therefore, is to study regions that have been relatively neglected by traditional synoptic historiography.

The first volume of this history began when human (or human-like creatures) first entered Inner Eurasia, over 100,000 years ago. It ended in the thirteenth century with the rise of the Mongol Empire, the first empire to dominate most of Inner Eurasia. The second volume describes Inner Eurasia in a more inter-connected era, in which its many different communities and polities were shaped by influences from all of Eurasia and eventually from the entire world.

This volume begins with the breakup of the Mongol Empire after 1260, and the creation of regional khanates. Then it tracks the decline of pastoral nomadic polities, and the rise of a second Inner Eurasian empire, based on agriculture rather than on pastoral nomadism. That empire began as Muscovy and became Russia. It arose in the forested lands north-west of the Urals. By the late nineteenth century, it ruled most of Inner Eurasia. But the world was changing around it, in an era of global competition and fossil fuels. Struggling to cope with these changes, the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917. It was speedily rebuilt in a new form, that of the Soviet command economy. By 1950, the Soviet Union not only dominated Inner Eurasia, as the Mongol and Russian empires had done before it, it had also become a global superpower. In

1991, like the Mongol Empire in 1260, the Soviet Union also collapsed while still a superpower. In its place, there emerged new, independent polities, all struggling to find a place in a globalized, capitalist world.

These volumes cover so much history that their approach has to be synoptic. They rest mainly on the work of other historians rather than on exhaustive primary research. One advantage of synoptic histories is that they will generally be more accessible to non-specialists. But, like gambits in chess, they begin with a sacrifice: they give up the expert's accumulated knowledge of particular, sharply focused topics, because this type of expertise is unattainable at very large scales. So synoptic histories may miss details or nuances that specialists will regard as important. But the point of a sacrifice is to see the game in new ways that offer new strategic perspectives and insights. (Of course, the aficionado of gambits will also argue that conventional strategies are gambits, too, because they sacrifice the possibility of unexpected insights and limit your view of the game.)

The main new insight we gain by reframing the history of this region is an appreciation of some important and distinctive features shared by all Inner Eurasian societies. In her wonderful history of the medieval world system, Janet Abu-Lughod argues that new insights often arise not just from new research and new facts, but also from "changing the distance from which 'facts' are observed and thereby changing the scale of what falls within the purview."<sup>2</sup> If a shift in the light can change what a photographer sees, so, too, a shift in the concepts we use to illuminate the past can change what we see as historians, sometimes in subtle ways, sometimes in more profound ways.

A single large question shapes the argument of both volumes: how has Inner Eurasia's distinctive ecology and geography shaped its history? In particular, how have geography and ecology shaped patterns of state building and resource gathering, or patterns of "mobilization." In exploring these patterns, the argument builds on two central ideas: the geographical concept of Inner Eurasia, and the historical concept of mobilization. Both require explanation.

## INNER EURASIA

The idea of Inner Eurasia was introduced and defined in Volume 1, where I argued that there is an ecological and geographical coherence to this entire region that has shaped its political and cultural history over many millennia, and continues to do so today. This section will summarize those arguments.<sup>3</sup>

Inner Eurasia includes the inner and northern half of the Eurasian landmass. At about 27 million sq. kilometers, Inner Eurasia is similar in size to its complement, Outer Eurasia. But it is distinctive enough to deserve its own history. Of course, such claims must not be overstated. Not everything changes at the imaginary border between Inner and Outer Eurasia. Nevertheless, particularly at large scales, the differences are important and durable enough to have generated distinctive histories. Focusing on how geography and ecology shaped Inner Eurasia's history can help us move beyond nationalistic accounts



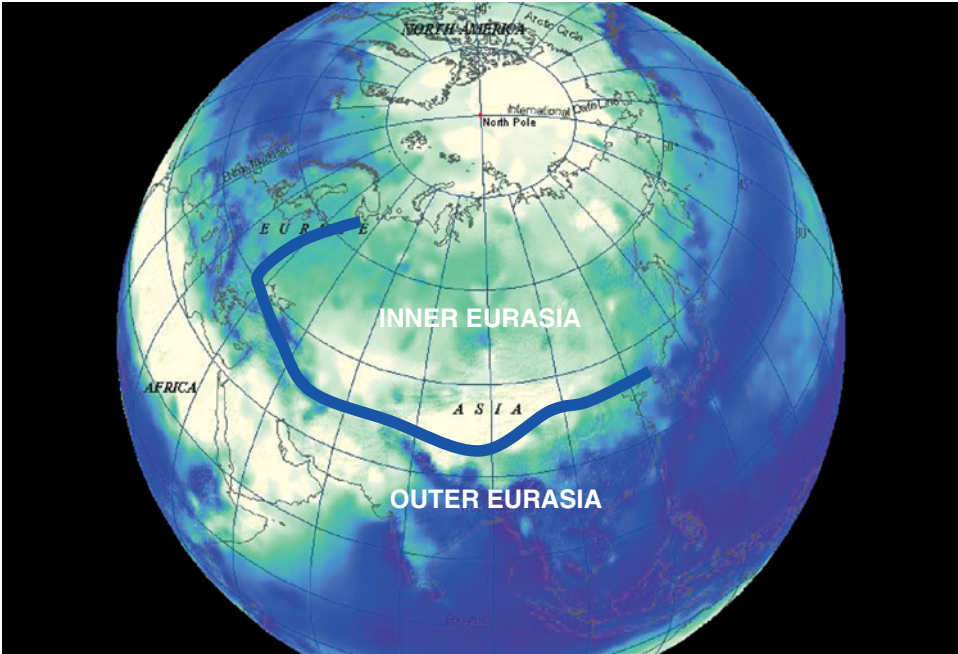
of the past that smuggle in essentially metaphysical assumptions about the distinctiveness of particular peoples, nations, or ethnicities. By making this move, nationalist historiographies often assume what needs to be explained. They also run the risk of anachronism. Was there really a distinct “Russian” people in the thirteenth century? Modern Ukrainian nationalists would certainly deny such a claim. Were the Mongols of the thirteenth century really the same “people” as today’s Mongols? Did the Uzbek and Kazakh “nations” first appear in the fifteenth century?

Focusing on geography rather than ethnicity can, of course, generate new forms of “essentialism.” The danger is apparent in modern “Eurasianist” writings, which also find an underlying coherence in the histories of all the lands once within the Russian and Soviet empires.<sup>4</sup> The argument of this book overlaps at some points with Eurasianist approaches to the history of Inner Eurasia, but it also differs from them in important ways. Above all, its approach is scholarly, tentative, and exploratory. It tries to identify some ways in which durable aspects of Inner Eurasia’s geography and ecology may have shaped the histories of Inner Eurasian societies and polities, without overstating the region’s coherence or understating the role of contingency and the unexpected.

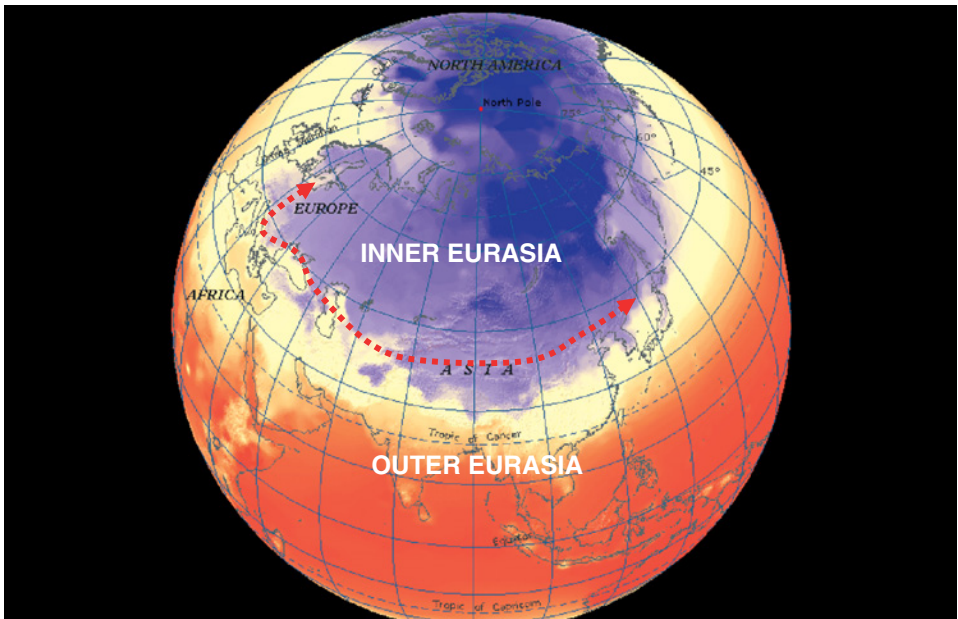
At very large scales, three large features of Inner Eurasian geography have influenced its history. Inner Eurasia differs from Outer Eurasia ecologically, demographically, and topographically.

Ecologically, Inner Eurasia is generally less productive than Outer Eurasia. Interiority means that most of it receives less rainfall because it is far from the oceans, and its long, northern Arctic shores are ice-bound for much of the year (Map 0.2). Remoteness from ice-free oceans also ensures that Inner Eurasian climates are generally more extreme, more “continental,” than those of Outer Eurasia because they are not moderated to the same extent by large bodies of open water. Inner Eurasia is also more northerly than most of Outer Eurasia, so that its climates are generally colder, and it receives less sunlight for photosynthesis (Map 0.3).

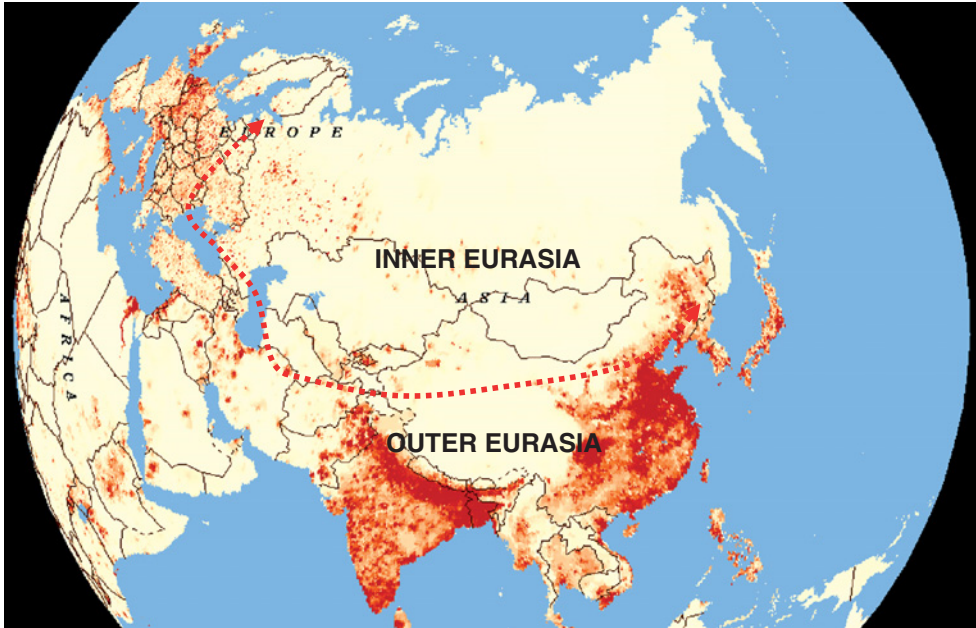
Inner Eurasia’s distinctive ecology helps explain a second distinctive feature: its demography. Aridity, lack of sunlight, and continental climates explain why it took so long for agriculture to get going in most of Inner Eurasia, while it flourished in much of Outer Eurasia. In Inner Eurasia, there were a few regions of early agriculture along China’s northern and northwestern borders, in small irrigated oases in Central Asia, and in regions of rainfall agriculture north of the Black Sea. But then it stalled, so agriculture was a late arrival in most of Inner Eurasia. That meant that, for much of the agrarian era of human history, when agriculture provided the people and resources for wealthy states and empires, Inner Eurasia remained a region of low productivity and thin populations. Only from about 1,500 years ago, when large numbers of peasants began migrating from eastern Europe into the forested lands west of the Urals, did rainfall agriculture start to spread more rapidly through Inner Eurasia. As agriculture spread, populations increased, and so did the number of villages, towns, and cities. Nevertheless, the large differences persisted. The late arrival of agriculture meant that Inner Eurasian societies had access to less energy and



**Map 0.2** Interiority and low rainfall. Interiority means generally lower rainfall than in Outer Eurasia. Darker shading = higher rainfall. Adapted from Encarta.



**Map 0.3** Northerliness and low agricultural productivity. Northerliness means lower temperatures, less sunlight, and generally less photosynthesis than in Outer Eurasia. Darker regions inside the dotted line have average January temperatures below 0°. Adapted from Encarta.



**Map 0.4** Generally lower agricultural productivity than Outer Eurasia means low population density, even today. Darker regions have denser populations. Adapted from Encarta.

less food than most societies of Outer Eurasia, so they were (and they remain) more thinly settled than most Outer Eurasian societies (Map 0.4).

For several millennia, the dominant productive technology of Inner Eurasia was pastoral nomadism, a lifeway that depended primarily on domesticated animals rather than domesticated plants. Herding horses, sheep, and cattle worked well in the arid steppelands that cross the southern half of Inner Eurasia like a belt. But if you rely on animals rather than plants, you live higher on the food chain than farmers, and that means less energy is available because so much energy is lost as it moves from photosynthesizing plants to herbivores and up through the food chain. This is why the food chain generates a sort of ecological pyramid, with smaller populations the higher you climb. Just as you find fewer lions than zebra in a given area of savanna, so, too, you find fewer pastoral nomads than farmers for a given area of land. Indeed, ecologists often argue that so much energy is lost as it moves up the food chain that populations decline by approximately 90 percent at each step. This means there is a neat ecological logic to the fact that Inner Eurasian populations were usually between one tenth and one twentieth the size of Outer Eurasian populations, even though the two regions are about the same size (Table 0.1 and Figure 0.1).<sup>5</sup> Demographic statistics highlight the fundamental contrast in productivity between the two halves of the Eurasian landmass.

Low population density shaped Inner Eurasia's political, economic, and social history. Above all, it meant that people (and the stores of energy that they represented) were scarcer and more valuable relative to land than in Outer

**Table 0.1** Populations of Inner and Outer Eurasia

Date	Inner Eurasia pop. (mill.)	Outer Eurasia pop. (mill.)	Ratio (%): Inner/Outer Eurasia
-200	4	105	4
0	5	143	4
200	6	162	4
400	7	157	5
600	8	161	5
800	9	178	5
1000	10	215	4
1100	12	268	5
1200	16	301	5
1300	17	301	6
1400	17	287	6
1500	20	353	6
1600	24	466	5
1700	30	525	6
1800	49	792	6
1900	129	1,331	10
2000	340	4,050	8

Source: McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 78–82, 158–165.

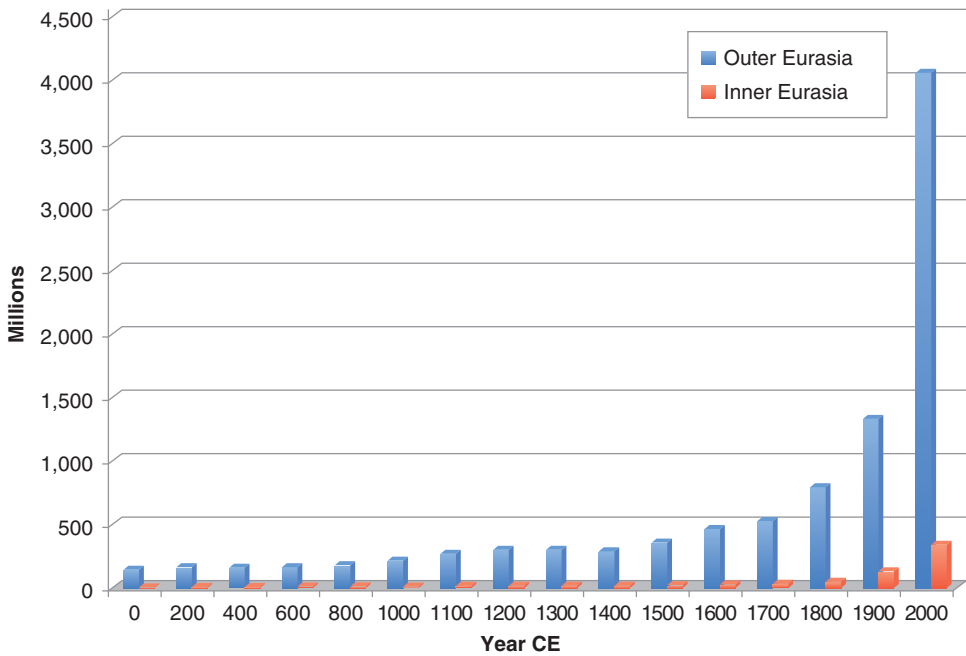
Eurasia. This is why political systems in Inner Eurasia often seemed more interested in mobilizing people than in controlling land.

The third distinctive feature of Inner Eurasia is its topography. Dominating Inner Eurasia is the largest area of flatlands in the world, a feature that aided the movements of pastoralists, merchants, and armies, and deprived cities and states of natural defenses. Successful and mobile armies could advance over huge distances without facing major geographical barriers. This is one reason why Inner Eurasia was home to the largest contiguous empires that have ever existed: the Mongol, Russian, and Soviet empires (Figure 0.2). On the other hand, the ecology and sheer size of the vast Inner Eurasian flatlands posed distinctive challenges to armies unused to them. As the Persian emperor Darius discovered in the sixth century BCE, the Han emperor Wudi in the first century BCE, and Napoleon and Hitler in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, moving infantry armies through the vast, arid plains of Inner Eurasia could be a costly, dangerous, and thankless task.

## MOBILIZATION

The second idea that needs some explanation is that of “mobilization.” Mobilization means gathering resources, whether in the form of labor, energy, or materials.

All complex systems mobilize energy and resources, from stars to plants to political systems. They all depend on flows of energy, and understanding how they capture and use energy can help us understand how complex systems work.<sup>6</sup> The biosphere traps energy from sunlight through photosynthesis; humans tap those flows of energy to feed and support themselves; and states mobilize energy and resources from the populations and lands they rule. In



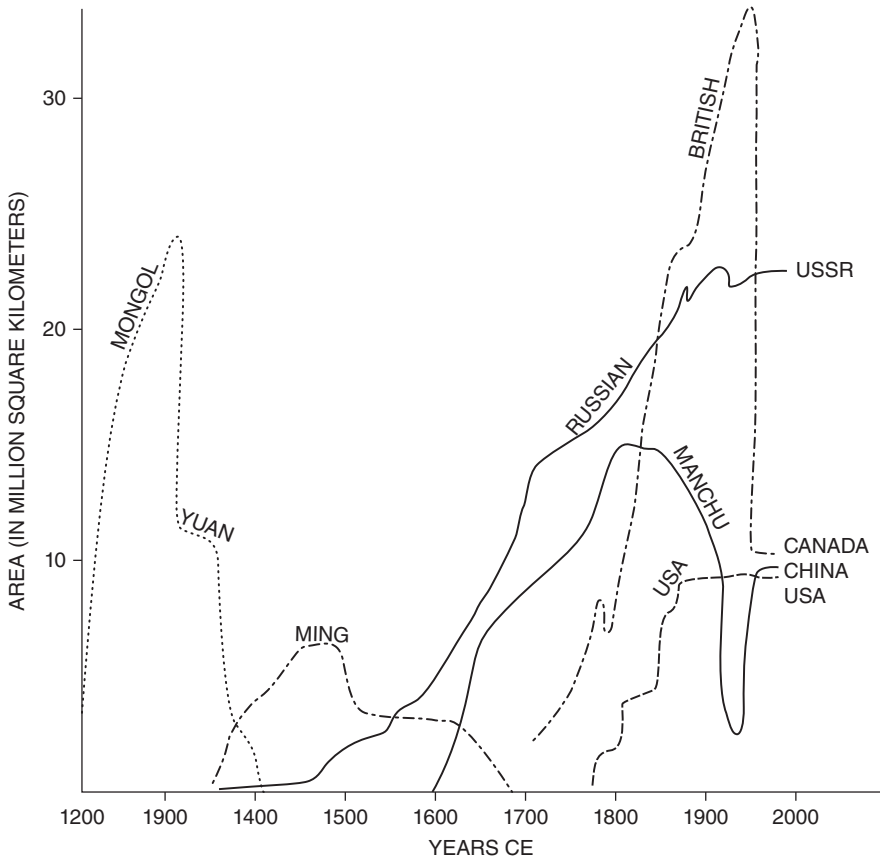
**Figure 0.1** Populations of Inner and Outer Eurasia: same area, different demography. Data from McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 78–82, 158–165.

effect, the appearance of states in the last five thousand years of human history has added a new step to the food chain as elites mobilized energy from other humans who mobilized it from other organisms.

The illustration in Figure 0.3 is from the early twentieth century. In cartoon fashion, it captures the idea of mobilization nicely, as resources generated by the population are squeezed out of them, pumped to the government, and occasionally siphoned off by intermediate groups of what a modern economist might call “rent-takers.” The sixteenth-century Muscovite notion of “*kormlenie*” – literally the right of officials to “feed” off the population – captures perfectly the idea of mobilization as an extension of the food chain. In the 1990s the same word was used to describe the pillaging of state property that took place after the breakup of the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

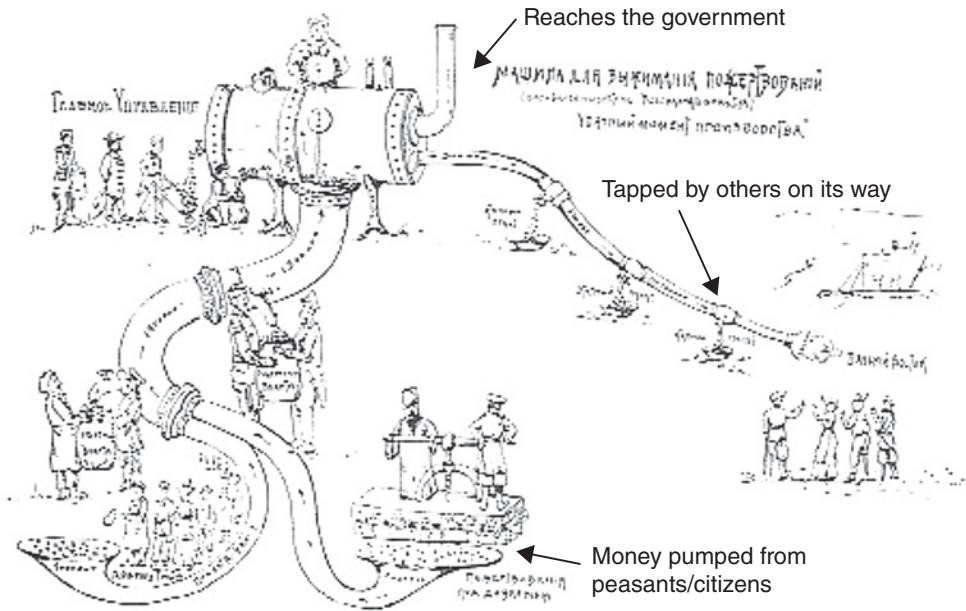
We can learn a lot about states by studying exactly *how* they mobilized resources. Inevitably, their methods depended on the environments in which they emerged, and the methods their subjects used to mobilize food, energy, and supplies. In Inner Eurasia, limited resources, scattered populations, and vast distances explain why mobilizing was generally harder than in Outer Eurasia, and would require different strategies. These strategies would shape the political cultures of the entire region, which is why the idea of mobilization will play a strategic role in the argument of this volume.

Mobilizing the energy, products, and military power of pastoral nomads was a very different task from that of mobilizing energy, resources, and military



**Figure 0.2** Largest world empires. Taagepera, “Overview of the Growth of the Russian Empire,” 5.

power from peasant farmers. Mobilizing resources from peasants was also a trickier challenge in regions such as Inner Eurasia, where agricultural productivity was low, than in more productive regions. In Inner Eurasia, would-be mobilizers had to muster resources over large areas, and that required high levels of elite mobility and coordination. Competition between rival mobilizers increased the importance of mobility and coordination over large areas, creating sustained pressure to build highly centralized mobilizational machines with enormous reach. We will see later the many ways in which such pressures shaped methods of mobilization and state formation in Inner Eurasia over many centuries, creating centralized and disciplined political cultures whose habits still shape the region’s history today. In Inner Eurasia, direct mobilization of resources through the effective threat of state coercion was generally more important than mobilization through commercial exchanges. Direct mobilization is sometimes described as “tribute-taking.”<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 0.3** A mobilization pump, from a Red Cross cartoon produced during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. Money to support wounded soldiers is squeezed from the peasantry and accepted in the form of donations; that money is tapped legally and illegally as it is piped to the government, various sections of which take significant shares of it, before the reduced flow travels through Siberia, where more is tapped, leaving very little at the end for wounded soldiers. Christian, “*Living Water*,” 4. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

In the last two centuries, however, the fossil fuels revolution and the growth of commerce have transformed strategies of mobilization everywhere, and these changes would pose new challenges to Inner Eurasian societies.

On the one hand, Inner Eurasia, which had seemed ecologically impoverished in the agrarian era of human history, suddenly began to look more prosperous in an era that drew power and wealth from fossil fuels and mineral ores, both of which Inner Eurasia had in abundance. In this sense, Inner Eurasia was a beneficiary of the fossil fuels revolution.

On the other hand, fossil fuels technologies relied much more than traditional technologies on efficiency and technological innovation. So they worked best with more commercial strategies of mobilization that encouraged innovation and efficiency and relied more on market forces. As markets became global from the sixteenth century, and new opportunities for arbitrage on a global scale generated increasing flows of wealth, strategies of commercial mobilization became increasingly powerful. There emerged city-states, and eventually whole societies, such as the Netherlands and the UK, whose wealth came largely from commercial mobilization. These are the societies that Marx described as “capitalist.” Their great advantage was that mobilizing through markets encouraged more creative and effective use of energy and resources

than more coercive forms of mobilization, because entrepreneurs had to economize in order to undercut rivals and make profits. So commercial mobilization could generally make energy and resources go further than traditional strategies of direct mobilization.

The new technologies of the fossil fuels era emerged in western Europe, within societies that relied increasingly on commercial mobilization. And they posed difficult problems for the mobilizational strategies of the societies that dominated Inner Eurasia by the nineteenth century. Could they survive into the modern era while relying on traditional strategies of direct mobilization to mobilize Inner Eurasia's vast reserves of fossil fuels and mineral ores? Or would they have to go through the painful process of renovating their traditional mobilizational strategies in order to unleash the power of market forces? Much of the history of Inner Eurasia in the fossil fuels era would be shaped by these tensions.

The fossil fuels revolution will divide this book in half, because we will see that, though it was possible to enter the fossil fuels era using traditional strategies of direct mobilization, and Inner Eurasia's vast resource wealth, it was hard to stay the course without also unleashing the power of the market. In Inner Eurasia, that difference greatly complicated the task of entering the modern era.

## *MOBILIZATION IN INNER EURASIA*

The core argument of this volume, then, is that the geography and ecology of Inner Eurasia created durable pressures that shaped structures of mobilization over many centuries and remain significant today. Those structures depended mainly on direct mobilization of resources over large areas by highly centralized, disciplined elite groups with great reach. Market forces played a more limited role in mobilization, which created a persistent bias towards extensive rather than intensive forms of growth. But it is important to stress that this is not a deterministic argument. We will note many points at which the histories of different parts of Inner Eurasia might have taken different pathways. It is not hard to imagine alternative pathways into and out of the revolutionary crisis of 1917, or to imagine a powerful Lithuanian empire dominating fourteenth-century Muscovy, or to see different, and perhaps less centralist outcomes to the breakdown of the Soviet era. Nevertheless, I will argue that the ecology and geography of Inner Eurasia created sustained pressures that made the emergence of centralist patterns of rule and economic management particularly likely. And I will also argue that it was vanishingly unlikely that powerful pastoral nomadic polities would survive into the era of fossil fuels. In this sense, I will argue that geography and ecology have shaped patterns of mobilization and governance that are still apparent today.

The argument will proceed chronologically, through periods of varying length. Within each period, the book's chapters will survey different regions of Inner Eurasia, relying loosely on a distinction between heartland regions,



the primary drivers of change, and other parts of Inner Eurasia whose influence was less far-reaching. I have tried to structure the argument so that, while it brings out the coherence of Inner Eurasian history as a whole, readers can also pick and choose to get an overview of the distinctive histories of different regions: the lands west of the Volga which became the Russian imperial heartlands, the urbanized lands of Central Asia both in the west (lands dominated by the Russian and Soviet empires for much of the twentieth century) and the east (Xinjiang), the Kazakh steppelands, Siberia, and also Mongolia (the heartland in the thirteenth century).

### *NOTE ON GEOGRAPHICAL TERMINOLOGY*

In a book that covers the history of half of Eurasia over more than half a millennium, geographical terminology can be extremely confusing. In the Soviet period, the phrase “*tseñtral’naia Aziia*” referred to modern Xinjiang, to Central Asia east of the Pamirs, while English-speaking scholars have often used the phrase “Central Asia” for Soviet Central Asia, sometimes also including Kazakhstan and parts of Xinjiang. Xinjiang itself is a modern name, first used systematically from the eighteenth century, for a region previously known as Turkestan or Moghulistan.

For the sake of clarity, and at the risk of anachronism, I have adopted some arbitrary labels to refer to major regions of Inner Eurasia.

Moving from west to east, I will often refer to three broad divisions: Western, Central, and Eastern Inner Eurasia, with the Volga river and the Altai as rough border markers (Map 0.5). These divisions break the steppes into three major regions, which I will refer to as the Pontic steppes, the Kazakh steppes, and the Mongolian steppes. As we move from north to south, each of these three regions includes forest lands, regions of steppe and arid steppe or desert, and more urbanized southern borderlands.

I will use the term “Central Asia” to include the entire Central region south of Siberia, so it includes both the Kazakh steppes and the agrarian and urbanized region south of the Kazakh steppes, which I will describe as “Transoxiana.” I will use the modern term, Xinjiang, to refer to eastern Central Asia, those parts of Central Asia that lay east of the Pamirs and south of Mongolia and Siberia, and are now part of China. In earlier periods, I will sometimes use the more ancient term “Moghulistan” for Xinjiang. The Silk Roads threaded their way through northern Xinjiang, which includes the regions I will describe as Zungharia and Uighuristan. Zungharia is the region of steppe, farmland and towns that lies to the north west of the Tarim basin within modern Xinjiang. Semirechie lies within modern Kazakhstan, but is really a western continuation of Zungharia. I will use the term, Uighuristan for the region of steppe and desert east of Zungharia and north of the Tarim basin, taking the oasis of Hami/Kumul as a rough dividing point between Zungharia and Uighuristan. Southern Xinjiang is dominated by the Tarim basin or Altishahr, the southern parts of Xinjiang surrounding the terrible Taklamakan desert. I will normally



**Map 0.5** Major regions of Inner Eurasia. Adapted from Encarta.

use the term Mongolia to refer to the land included today within independent Mongolia, while the term “Inner Mongolia” refers to the southern parts of Mongolia that lie, today, within China.

Many other terms will be used only where historically appropriate. I will refer to the Principality of Moscow before the sixteenth century, to Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while I will refer to the Soviet Union (or the Soviet Empire) for most of the twentieth century.

From the seventeenth century onwards, I will use the term “heartland,” not for the whole of Inner Eurasia (which is how the geographer Halford Mackinder used the term because he saw Inner Eurasia as a global heartland), but for those regions that had the greatest impact, the primary drivers of Inner Eurasian history. In the eight centuries covered by this volume, the heartland shifted westwards. In the thirteenth century, it lay in the Mongolian steppes, with Karakorum as its capital. It was dominated by pastoral nomads. After the collapse of the unified Mongol Empire in 1260, there was no clear Inner Eurasian heartland until the seventeenth century, though it is possible to identify several regional “heartlands.” From the seventeenth century onwards, it makes sense to describe Muscovy and the Russian Empire as a new heartland, which would eventually expand to embrace as large an area as the Mongol Empire. China, though not itself part of Inner Eurasia, was a powerful driver

of change in the eastern parts of Inner Eurasia from the thirteenth century to today.

### *NOTE ON SPELLING*

Spelling and transliteration of words and names from many different periods, countries, and languages is as tricky as geographical terminology. I have aimed at internal consistency, and all the names I have used can be found in reputable scholarly sources. But, beyond that, I have preferred simplicity and ease of recognition over linguistic precision and consistency in transliteration. This means that I have preferred Khrushchev to Khrushchëv, Hulegu to Hüle'ü (I have dropped a lot of diacritics in the body of the text because they mean little to non-specialists), and Karakorum over Qaraqorum. It also means that the spellings I use are those most likely to be recognized by English-speaking users (thus, Kiev rather than Kyiv). In choice of spellings, my primary goal has been ease of reading for those who are not specialists in the many different histories surveyed in this volume.

Many place names have changed over time. The Mongolian capital in the nineteenth century was known as Khuriye and, by most foreigners, as Urga. Today, it is Ulaanbaatar. The Russian capital, St. Petersburg, became Petrograd in 1914, and Leningrad in 1924. In 1991, it became St. Petersburg once more. As much as possible, I have tried to use contemporary names, though I have often included reminders of different names that may be more familiar to modern readers.

### *NOTE ON CHRONOLOGY*

Until February 1, 1918, the Russian Empire used the Julian calendar, which by this time was two weeks behind the Gregorian calendar, used in western Europe since the sixteenth century. The dates given in this book are those that would have been used by contemporaries if they used either of these calendars. For the Russian Empire this means that I use dates according to the Julian calendar before February 1, 1918, and then Gregorian dates after that date (February 14, 1918 under the Gregorian calendar). This means that dates for the Russian Empire before February 1, 1918 are 14 days behind those for the same date in Europe, but normally this difference is not significant. Where it may matter, some sources give dates according to the Julian calendar (OS or "Old Style") and the Gregorian calendar (NS or "New Style"). Thus, the "October Revolution" (OS) actually took place in November according to the Gregorian calendar (NS), so some sources describe it as the November Revolution. For the same reason, some sources say that the Tsar resigned in February rather than March 1917. After February 1 (February 14 NS), 1918, when the new Soviet government adopted the Gregorian calendar, there is a chronological gap of two weeks during which nothing happened because the day following February 1, 1918 (OS) was February 15, 1918 (NS).

## NOTES

- 1 See Christian, “‘Inner Eurasia’ as a Unit of World History”; Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, Vol. 1.
- 2 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, Preface.
- 3 For more detailed explanations, see Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, Vol. 1, Ch. 1, and Christian, “‘Inner Eurasia’ as a Unit of World History.”
- 4 On Eurasianist thought and its role in modern Russia and elsewhere, see Bassin and Pozo, *The Politics of Eurasianism*.
- 5 McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 18, 78–79, 122, 157–169; and Biraben, “Essai sur l’évolution du nombre des hommes,” 16; figures for 2000, using roughly comparable areas, from *World Development Indicators*, Table 1.1, “Size of the Economy,” 18–20.
- 6 Chaisson, *Cosmic Evolution*; Christian, *Maps of Time*; Christian, “The Return of Universal History.”
- 7 Hedlund, *Putin’s Energy Agenda*, 336.
- 8 See Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, Ch. 3.

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# PART I

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*Inner Eurasia in the Agrarian Era:  
1260–1850*



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# [1] *INNER EURASIA IN THE LATE THIRTEENTH CENTURY: THE MONGOL EMPIRE AT ITS HEIGHT*

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## *THE WORLD IN 1250*

First it should be known that in every clime of the world there have been and are people who dwell in cities, people who live in villages, and people who inhabit the wilderness. The wilderness dwellers are particularly numerous in territories that are grass lands, have fodder for many animals, and are also far from civilization and agricultural lands.<sup>1</sup>

In 1250, human societies were still divided into zones so disconnected that they could almost have lived on separate planets. Human communities in Afro-Eurasia, the Americas, Australasia, and the Pacific had barely any contact with each other.

Of these world zones, the Afro-Eurasian zone, reaching from the Cape of Good Hope to northeastern Siberia, was by far the largest, had the most people, the greatest variety of cultures, cuisines, and technologies, and enjoyed the most vibrant exchanges of goods, peoples, ideas, and even diseases. These exchanges were most vigorous within the densely populated agrarian societies of Outer Eurasia, from China through South-East Asia, to India, the Middle East, North Africa, the Mediterranean region, and Europe. But increasing exchanges also forged connections through the southern parts of Inner Eurasia, along the so-called Silk Roads.<sup>2</sup> Many of these connections were created by regional pastoralists and traders. But they flourished best when Outer Eurasian empires that bordered on Inner Eurasia, such as China or Persia, became interested in long-distance trade through the region, and protected merchant caravans or sent caravans of their own, or when powerful Inner Eurasian empires tried to tap the wealth of neighboring regions of Outer Eurasia, or when both types of polities existed simultaneously.

Since the first millennium BCE, such mechanisms had driven several pulses of trans-Eurasian integration. At the start of the Common Era, large empires in Han China, Persia, and the Mediterranean, and steppe empires such as the

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

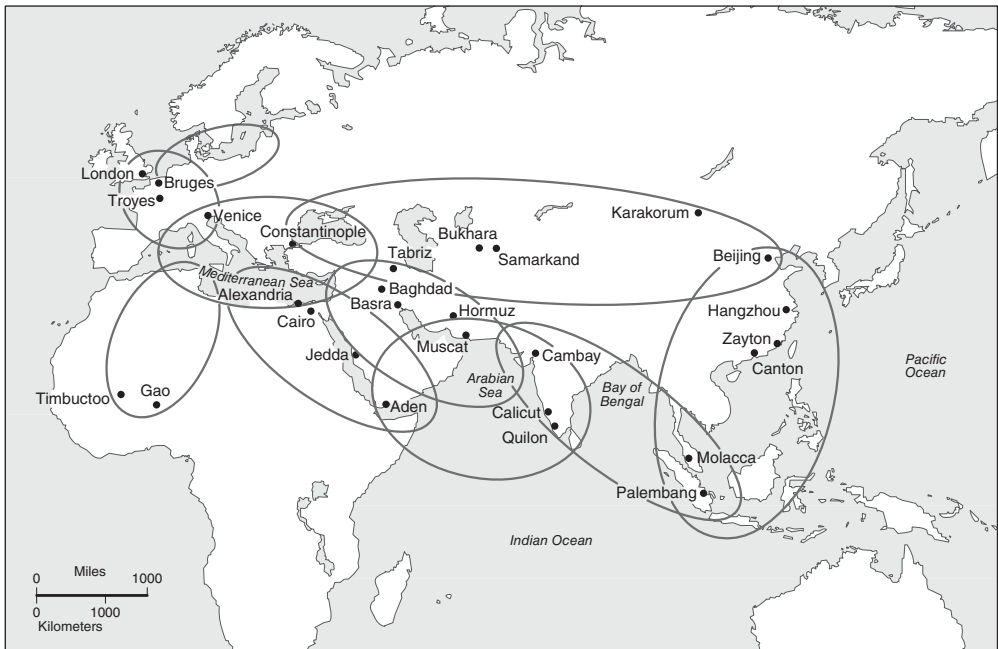
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Xiongnu in Mongolia, or borderland empires such as the Kusana in modern Central Asia and Afghanistan, synergized transcontinental exchanges. A second integrative pulse coincided with the rise of Islam from the seventh century CE.<sup>3</sup> It linked powerful empires in the Mediterranean region, Persia and China, with Turkic steppe empires. In the thirteenth century, the Mongol Empire emerged during a third integrative pulse, and helped create long-distance exchanges more vibrant than ever before.<sup>4</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod has argued that this pulse created the first Afro-Eurasian “world system,” by briefly linking eight regional networks of exchange into a single system (Map 1.1).<sup>5</sup>

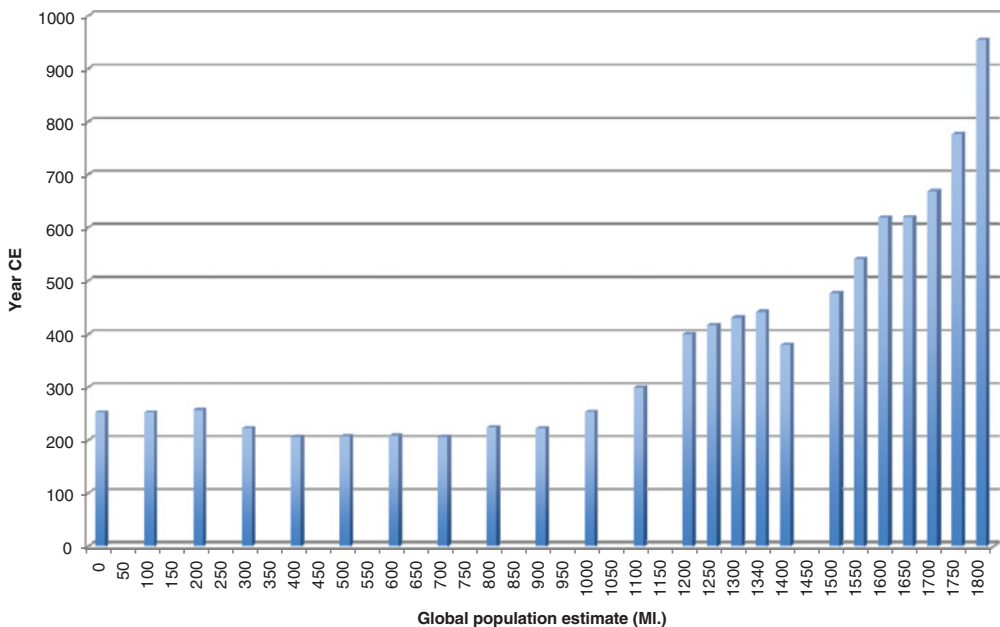
The globalizing pulse of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries networked more of Afro-Eurasia more powerfully than ever before. In Inner Eurasia, with its scattered populations and limited surpluses, new flows of wealth could have a spectacular impact. Here, they jump-started political, economic, cultural, and military mobilization in a sort of “sparking across the gap.”<sup>6</sup> The Mongol Empire’s Chinggisid rulers understood what vast arbitrage profits could be made by moving goods such as silk or tea or silver, which were rare and expensive in one part of Eurasia but common and cheap in another, and many Mongolian leaders, including Chinggis Khan’s own family, formed profitable trading partnerships, or *ortoq*, with Central Asian merchants.<sup>7</sup> These yoked the financial and commercial expertise of Central Asian cities and merchants to the military power of Mongol armies, in alliances that mobilized what were, by Inner Eurasian standards, colossal amounts of wealth.



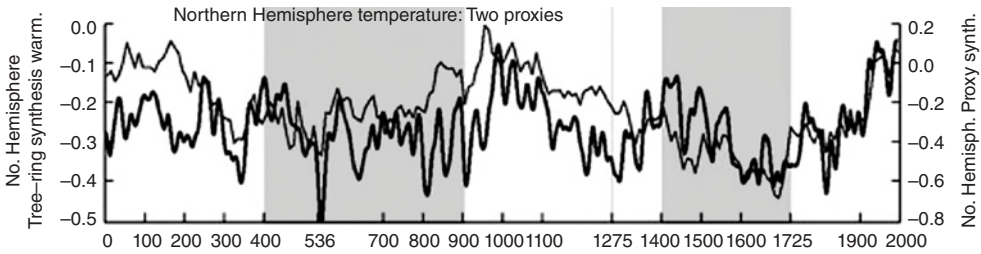
**Map 1.1** Abu-Lughod map of Afro-Eurasian trade circuits prior to 1500. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 34. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

By protecting trans-Eurasian commerce, Mongol rulers encouraged travel and trade along the Silk Roads. For the first time in world history, many individuals crossed the entire continent. They included Marco Polo, the Mongol soldiers and commanders who campaigned from Mongolia to eastern Europe, and the Nestorian Christian missionary Rabban Sauma, who left northern China for Persia in about 1275, before traveling to Rome and Paris as an ambassador of the Mongol ruler of Persia, the Il-Khan.<sup>8</sup> In about 1340, Francis Balducci Pegolotti, an agent of the Florentine mercantile company of the Bardi, compiled a handbook for Florentine merchants, which asserted confidently that, “The road you travel from Tana [modern Azov] to Cathay is perfectly safe, whether by day or by night, according to what the merchants say who have used it.”<sup>9</sup> At about the time that Pegolotti’s guidebook was published, the Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta accompanied caravans from the Black Sea through the Pontic and Khorezmian steppes to Central Asia and on to India. He may have traveled to China before returning to his native Morocco and making one final trip across the Sahara.<sup>10</sup>

Warmer climates and several centuries of demographic growth helped drive the thirteenth-century pulse of integration. Particularly in previously underpopulated regions on the borders of major agrarian regions, populations rose fast from late in the first millennium CE, as peasants migrated down the demographic gradient into underpopulated regions in southern China or western Inner Eurasia, bringing new technologies and new crops or crop varieties, and driving commerce and urbanization (Figure 1.1). According to McEvedy and



**Figure 1.1** Global populations over 1,800 years. Brooke, *Climate Change*, 259. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.



**Figure 1.2** Climate change 1 CE to 2000 CE. Brooke, *Climate Change*, 250. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

Jones, the population of Outer Eurasia changed little between 200 and 800 CE, by which time it was 180 million.<sup>11</sup> Then growth picked up. By 1000 CE, 215 million people lived in Outer Eurasia, and by 1200 CE, 315 million. In much of Eurasia, population growth may have been linked to the generally warmer and wetter climates of the “Medieval Climate Anomaly,” which John L. Brooke dates to 900–1275.<sup>12</sup> During this period northern hemisphere temperatures were on average more stable and warmer than they would be again until the twentieth century (Figure 1.2).<sup>13</sup>

The Medieval Climate Anomaly played out somewhat differently in Inner Eurasia. Here, it generated long periods of drought and cold from 1000 CE until the late fourteenth century. These bleak conditions provide the background to the civil wars of Chinggis Khan’s youth, as they limited livestock levels and impoverished pastoralists. Climates were particularly cold during the 1180s and 1190s. However, recent tree-ring evidence suggests that there was a brief period of exceptionally wet conditions in Mongolia between 1211 and 1225, during which expanding grasslands allowed livestock herds to multiply, fueling the explosive growth of the Mongol Empire under Chinggis Khan.<sup>14</sup> But colder, drier conditions returned to Inner Eurasia for much of the thirteenth century, after which humidity increased in the late fourteenth century, reaching a peak between 1550 and 1750.<sup>15</sup>

Demographic information for Inner Eurasia is even less reliable than for Outer Eurasia. However, except for brief periods of growth in livestock populations, it is unlikely that there was sustained long-term growth in the steppe zones, because pastoral nomadic societies had probably reached their maximum carrying capacity as early as the first millennium BCE, after which there remained no unused regions of steppeland.<sup>16</sup> Growth was also limited in the oases of Central Asia, where deserts limited the farmable area, while irrigation agriculture could flourish only in periods of political stability and under rulers who maintained and extended irrigation canals. However, in the agrarian fringes of Inner Eurasia, along the western borderlands of Kievan Rus’, populations probably did increase. Here, peasant farmers from eastern Europe brought new lands into cultivation, often under the protection of new regional principalities. Even here, though, a combination of arid conditions, poor forest soils, and warfare during the Mongol invasions probably slowed growth in the first half of the thirteenth century.

The figures of McEvedy and Jones suggest that the population of Inner Eurasia grew from about 9 million in 800 to about 12 million in 1100 and 16 million in 1200 (when the population of Outer Eurasia was about 315 million). Then growth slowed, rising to just 17 million by 1300. Most of this growth was probably in the agrarian lands of Kievan Rus'. The different population histories of different parts of Inner Eurasia mark the beginnings of a belated agricultural invasion of Inner Eurasia that would eventually transform the entire region.

## *KARAKORUM: THE MONGOL EMPIRE AT ITS APOGEE, AND A PUZZLE*

Mongol power was at its height between 1250 and 1260. In the late 1250s, Khan Mongke ruled the largest land empire that had ever existed (see Figure 0.2). His authority reached from eastern Europe to the newly conquered regions of Persia (the Il-Khanate), to Central Asia, Xinjiang, Mongolia, and northern China. No single ruler would control such a vast area again until the late nineteenth century, when the Russian Empire ruled slightly less territory than Mongke.

As remarkable as the Mongol Empire's size was the speed of its creation, a story told in Volume 1 of this history. Andrew Sherratt's metaphor of "sparkling across the gap" is apt here, with its hint that in regions of limited human and material resources such as Inner Eurasia, weak external charges can spark explosive change. In any case, pastoral nomadic communities were inherently unstable. Sudden outbreaks of disease, or the climatic shock known as *dzhut* (which covered grass with ice so that herds starved to death) could destroy herds and ruin families and clans in days. Instability was guaranteed by the constantly changing relationship between natural resources (above all grasslands and water), the size of herds, and the size of human populations. Sudden changes in any of these factors could ignite wars over pasturelands and herds because, since the middle of the first millennium BCE, there were no remaining reserves of pasturelands. Local wars, in turn, could cascade into large military mobilizations and long-distance military migrations with the formation of regional military alliances.<sup>17</sup>

In 1150 CE, Mongke's grandfather, Temujin, the founder of the Mongol Empire, was an outcast in a Mongolia torn apart by vicious civil wars. Half a century later, in 1206, Temujin assumed the title of Chinggis Khan, becoming supreme ruler of the Mongols and their many allies. At his death in 1227, Chinggis Khan's empire reached from northern China to Central Asia. Juvaini, a Persian who served the Mongols and visited their capital, Karakorum, in 1252–1253, knew individuals of Chinggis Khan's generation who had lived through these astonishing years. He described their experiences in typically flowery language:

they [the Mongols] continued in this indigence, privation and misfortune until the banner of Chingiz-Khan's fortune was raised and they issued forth from the straits of hard-ship into the amplitude of well-being, from a prison into a garden,

from the desert of poverty into a palace of delight and from abiding torment into reposeful pleasancess; their raiment being of silk and brocade, ... And so it has come to pass that the present world is the paradise of that people...<sup>18</sup>

Karakorum, the empire's capital from 1235 to the 1260s, provides an apt symbol of these astonishing changes. It was built near the Orkhon river, in a region fertile enough to support some agriculture. Many khans had built their winter camps here, and some had built imperial capitals. The area had been sacred to the Xiongnu in the second and first centuries BCE, to the Türk in the sixth and seventh centuries CE, and to the Uighurs in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>19</sup> Chinggis Khan understood and valued the region's imperial traditions, for many Uighurs served him, so he knew that the Uighur Empire had built a capital nearby at Karabalghasun/Ordu-Baligh. Before settling on Karakorum as his own winter camp in c.1220, Chinggis Khan surveyed the old Uighur site and found a stone stele, inscribed in Chinese with the name of the third Uighur emperor, Bogu kaghan (759–779). In 1235, Chinggis Khan's heir, Ogodei, recruited a Chinese official, Liu Ming, to start building a capital with mud walls, permanent buildings, and a complex of royal palaces (Figure 1.3).<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 1.3** Karakorum. Reconstruction of Ogodei's palace, from a University of Washington site. Courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh.

Karakorum grew like a gold rush town. Oceans of wealth arrived as military booty or with trade caravans. Fortunes were made and lost with such dizzying speed that commercial rules lost all meaning. Juvaini writes:

At the time when he ordered the building of Karakorum ... [Ogodei] one day entered the treasury where he found one or two *tümen* [thousands] of *balish* [gold ingots]. "What comfort," he said, "do we derive from the presence of all this money, which has to be constantly guarded? Let the heralds proclaim that whoever wants some *balish* should come and take them." Everybody set forth from the town and bent their steps towards the treasury. Master and slave, rich and poor, noble and base, greybeard and suckling, they all received what they asked for and, each having obtained an abundant share, left his presence uttering their thanks and offering up prayers for his well-being.<sup>21</sup>

People as well as goods flowed towards Karakorum: merchants, ambassadors, princes, priests, and soldiers, and also captives. The Mongols mobilized vast numbers of captives, most of them artisans, from all parts of the empire, and, despite its remote location, Karakorum became remarkably cosmopolitan.<sup>22</sup> The Franciscan friar William of Rubruck, who visited in 1254, met people from China and Korea, from Central Asia, Turkey, and Europe.<sup>23</sup> But Rubruck was not impressed with the city itself, perhaps because he had lived in Paris. "[D]iscounting the Chan's palace," he wrote, "it is not as fine as the town of St. Denis."<sup>24</sup> Even when the khan was in residence with all his followers, Karakorum's population was probably less than 15,000.<sup>25</sup> Marco Polo visited in the early 1270s (10 years past its prime) and described it as three miles in circumference and "surrounded by a strong rampart of earth, because stones are scarce here."<sup>26</sup> Beyond its two main streets, which have been excavated by Soviet and Mongolian archaeologists, most of its dwellings were probably tents.<sup>27</sup>

Despite its size and remoteness, for a few years Karakorum acted as a capital for much of Eurasia. In August 1246, leaders came from all parts of Eurasia to the *quriltai* that elected Khan Guyug as the empire's third supreme ruler.<sup>28</sup> Juvaini, who first visited Karakorum just six years later, provides a glittering roll call of this international gathering:

when messengers were dispatched to far and near to bid princes and *noyans* [Mongol lords] and summon sultans and kings and scribes, everyone left his home and country in obedience to the command. ... Sorqotani Beki [mentioned first, presumably because she was the mother of Juvaini's boss, the Persian Il-Khan] and her sons arrived first with such gear and equipage as "eye hath not seen nor ear heard." And from the East there came Köten with his sons; Otegin and his children; Elchitei; and the other uncles and nephews that reside in that region. From the *ordu* of Chaghatai [Chinggis Khan's second son] came Qara, Yesü, Büri, Baidar, Yesün-Toqa and the other grandsons and great-grandsons. From the country of Saqsin [Saray, on the Volga delta, Batu's capital] and Bulghar, since Batu did not come in person, he sent his elder brother Hordu [khan of the "Blue Horde" in the Kazakh steppes] and his younger brothers Sibän, Berke, Berkecher and Toqa-Timur [all of whom we will meet later; now we move to

sedentary regions of Inner and Outer Eurasia]. From Khitai [China] there came emirs and officials; and from Transoxiana and Turkestan the Emir Mas'ud [the son of Mahmud Yalavach, whom we will also meet] accompanied by the grandes of that region. With the Emir Arghun there came the celebrities and notables of Khorasan, Iraq, Lur, Azerbaijan and Shirvan. From Rum [Anatolia] came Sultan Rukn-ad-Din and the Sultan of Takavbor; from Georgia, the two Davids; from Aleppo, the brother of the Lord of Aleppo; from Mosul, the envoy of Sultan Badr-ad-Din Lu'lu; and from the City of Peace, Pabhdad, the chief *cadi* Fakhr-ad-Din. There also came the Sultan of Erzerum, envoys from the Franks [probably a reference to the mission of the Franciscan, John of Plano Carpini], and from Kerman and Fars also; and from 'Ala-ad-Din of Alamut, his governors in Quhistan, Shihab-ad-Din and Shams-ad-Din.<sup>29</sup>

The gatherings at which Chinggis Khan's three successors were enthroned (in 1229, 1246, and 1251) were perhaps the most international meetings of leaders before the twentieth century: the thirteenth-century equivalents of meetings of the United Nations. But deep in the Mongolian steppe, it was not easy to support such numbers. According to Juvaini:

this great assembly came with such baggage as befitted such a court; and there came also from other directions so many envoys and messengers that two thousand felt tents had been made ready for them: there came also merchants with the rare and precious things that are produced in the East and the West. When this assembly, which was such as no man had ever seen nor has the like thereof been read of in the annals of history, was gathered together, the broad plain was straitened and in the neighbourhood of the *ordu* there remained no place to alight in, and nowhere was it possible to dismount. ... There was also a great dearth of food and drink, and no fodder was left for the mounts and beasts of burden.<sup>30</sup>

How was it possible to generate such power in an environment of such scarcity? The Mongol Empire raises this puzzle in an acute form. But the puzzle is more general and applies to the whole history of Inner Eurasia. Why did the world's largest contiguous empires appear in this region? How did the Mongol Empire, the Russian Empire, and eventually the Soviet Union mobilize such power and wealth despite Inner Eurasia's ecological limitations?

Answering that puzzle will be one of the main tasks of this volume. The rest of this chapter will focus on the mobilizational strategies and methods used by pastoral nomadic polities like the Mongol Empire.

## *SOME RULES OF MOBILIZATION IN INNER EURASIA*

The mobilization systems that emerged in Inner Eurasia can seem puzzling because so many of our ideas about mobilization and state formation are derived from the study of agrarian polities in Outer Eurasia.

In agrarian regions, the rules of state formation are well understood. It was not difficult mobilizing resources from peasants because peasants everywhere are tied to their villages, and weakened by geographical dispersion, limited

education, and resources. So the main challenge for elites keen to “feed on” peasant resources was to build mobilizational structures just strong enough to extract labor and resources household by household or village by village. Coercion always played a significant role, so elites had to have disciplined groups of enforcers that could back up the demands of local tax collectors or overlords. But to deal with individual villages, these groups did not need to be large. However, coercion rarely worked on its own. Elites claimed legitimacy for their fiscal claims by aligning themselves with systems of religious belief or rule that justified their authority. They also offered protection for households and land. And, as so many traditional “how to rule” manuals insisted, it made sense to limit fiscal demands, both to earn the gratitude of peasants and to ensure they lived well enough to keep producing and paying year after year. Where agrarian populations were large, and elite groups were organized over large areas, such methods could mobilize enough people and resources to build imperial armies and magnificent cities, to support wealthy aristocracies, to engage in international trade in luxuries, and all too often, to mobilize the resources and people of neighboring regions through warfare and conquest.

It is because these rules seem so obvious that the rather different rules of mobilization in traditional Inner Eurasian societies can seem puzzling.

In the first place, resources were more scattered in Inner Eurasia, in contrast to Outer Eurasia, where they were concentrated conveniently in barns, villages, towns, and cities. In Inner Eurasia, would-be mobilizers had to mobilize people, animals, and resources scattered in small denominations over large areas. State-building was the political equivalent of a livestock muster. To mobilize over large areas, mobilizers had to be mobile. Like pastoral nomads and their livestock, they had to do a lot of grazing over large areas, and their grazing had to be coordinated over vast distances. Indeed, the larger the area the better, as more grazing meant more resources, so that advantages accumulated to large systems, in distinctively Inner Eurasian economies of scale. This powerful feedback cycle helps explain why Inner Eurasia, despite its limited human and material resources, was home to the largest contiguous empires ever created.

Where land was abundant and people scarce, mobilizers focused on people and animals, rather than land. This is why, for leaders such as Chinggis Khan:

human capital was of primary importance ... and the political struggles that accompanied the formation of the Mongol state concentrated on the control of people and herds rather than territorial gains. The demographic imbalance also meant that in order to continue to expand, the Mongols had to make use of the already conquered (and submitted) subjects. The first and perhaps most wide-ranging means for Mongol mobilization was therefore the army.<sup>31</sup>

Agriculturalists in Inner Eurasia would come to share similar ideas on mobilization. In 1763, a Russian noble, Count Zakhar Chernyshev, wrote, “[A] state is able to support its army not through the extensiveness of lands, but only in proportion to the people living in them and the revenues collected there.”<sup>32</sup>



## MOBILIZING RESOURCES IN THE STEPPES

Pastoralist societies used distinctive mobilizational strategies that arose from their distinctive lifeways. Unlike peasants, pastoralists were highly mobile. They grazed their animals over large areas, and they were used to controlling and directing the movements of large animals. In short, they were good at rounding up scarce calories over large areas. Inner Eurasian pastoralists traditionally used five main species of livestock: horses, cattle (or yaks in highland regions), sheep, goats, and camels. Around these animals there developed entire lifeways that included the use of tents made from wooden frames, usually covered with felt (*gers* in Mongolian or *yurts* in Turkic languages), regular, well-understood and controlled migration routes, and a clear division of labor by gender, age, and rank.<sup>33</sup> So well adapted were these lifeways to the steppelands of Inner Eurasia that many of their features have survived today in parts of Central Asia and Mongolia.

The construction of the *ger* – and the organization of domestic space within it – today is virtually indistinguishable to that described by William of Rubruck and Marco Polo in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. ... The *uurga* pole-lasso, the making of *airag* (fermented mares' milk), and a whole range of other current pastoral techniques date back to the thirteenth century at least.<sup>34</sup>

Mobilizing resources from pastoralists was harder than mobilizing from peasants. Pastoralists could flee easily, they were good fighters, and they generally had few resources apart from their herds. But mobilizing armies of pastoralists was relatively easy. Pastoral nomadic lifeways trained everyone in the handling and hunting of large animals and the skills needed to navigate over large distances and survive in the steppes, while constant petty feuds over pasturelands, livestock rustling, or vengeance for crimes provided regular training in combat.<sup>35</sup> Forming armies was much easier and cheaper in the steppelands than in agrarian regions.

Those armies could be used, in turn, to mobilize resources from neighboring agrarian regions. In the ninth century CE, a Chinese official noted:

for us to mobilise our forces would take at least ten days or a few weeks, while for them [the Uighurs] to take our men and animals prisoner would take at most a morning or an evening. By the time an imperial army could get there, the barbarians would already have returned home.<sup>36</sup>

In summary, forming armies was cheap and easy in the steppelands, but mobilizing resources was difficult, because they were scarce and scattered; whereas in agrarian regions, there were plenty of resources and people, but forming armies was complex and expensive because peasants lacked military skills.

These differences explain why, in the pastoral nomadic world, mobilization began with the formation of armies rather than with the collection of resources to pay for armies. And forming pastoralist armies began with the ties of kinship and tradition that structured pastoral nomadic societies. Households were embedded within systems of rank and lineage, of clans and family groups, that

controlled the allocation of pasturelands and adjudicated disputes.<sup>37</sup> Where military skills were almost universal, building small raiding parties was easy, because the same leaders who allocated pasture routes could also summon young men for combat. But raiding parties allowed little more than the odd booty raid. Building larger mobilizational systems in the steppes was a more complex operation, and involved two further steps: binding smaller armies into larger armies, and finding resources worth a significant mobilizational effort.

Linking armies required difficult negotiations between local and regional leaders, to create leadership structures that could coordinate the activities of separate armies over large areas. Such negotiations could only work if the rewards seemed substantial, so building military alliances and identifying promising mobilizational targets went together. For pastoral nomads, the most promising targets were neighboring agrarian regions, where resources were more abundant and diverse than in the steppes. This helps explain the geography of pastoral nomadic mobilizational systems, most of which emerged in a zone along the southern fringes of Inner Eurasia, from the Ordos in northern China, through Central Asia to the Pontic steppes. Here, pastoral nomads could mobilize from nearby agrarian regions or cities or trade routes. As Thomas Barfield has shown, using steppe armies to mobilize from agrarian regions was the preferred strategy of all Inner Eurasia's most powerful pastoralist empires. (See Map 1.2.)<sup>38</sup>



**Map 1.2** The zone of ecological symbiosis. Adapted from Encarta.

The techniques used by pastoralists to mobilize resources from agrarian regions became increasingly varied and sophisticated over 2,000 years. At their simplest, they took the form of crude booty raids whose destructiveness made long-term mobilization impossible. But over time there appeared systems of regular, sustained tribute collection, often combined with lucrative trading relationships. These more restrained methods of mobilization could evolve into formalized systems of tax collection and trade that could transfer huge amounts of wealth into the steppes and enrich thousands of pastoralists over many years.<sup>39</sup>

But none of these methods worked without some way of binding together regional nomadic armies into durable and disciplined coalitions. And this was the most difficult challenge for would-be mobilizers in the steppes: holding together military alliances that could mobilize from agrarian regions over many years, despite being formed from diverse, geographically scattered groups of pastoralists. Given the volatility of steppe politics, maintaining loyalty and discipline was an extraordinarily difficult juggling act that required a carefully calculated and ever-changing mixture of rewards and punishments. That required great political finesse from leaders because, in a world with few formalized institutions, alliances that depended almost entirely on personal relationships could snap in an instant over a casual insult or a single bad decision or military reverse.

What could hold such alliances together? First, flows of booty, skillfully distributed, could bind individuals, clans, and whole tribes into larger alliances. Knowing that their leader had the necessary vision and political skills made it worthwhile for regional chiefs to accept subordination to a supreme khan. Indeed, it often makes sense to think of such systems not as “states,” but rather as businesses, medieval versions of Walmart, perhaps, whose profits and costs were shared by leading participants.

... according to the Mongol tradition [the empire] was a joint property of the whole family of Chinggis Khan, among whom the Qa’an was only *primus inter pares*. The conquered lands were regarded as a common pool of wealth, that should benefit all the family members, and this principle was expressed in granting to individual princes local rights, mainly revenues from the conquered areas or lordship over a certain segment of the population.<sup>40</sup>

Most important of all in a world of personalistic politics were the skills of individual leaders and the cohesion and discipline of leadership groups. Building elite discipline began with family, clan, and lineage networks, the default social glue of most human societies without bureaucratic institutions. A skillful and charismatic leader could use such ties to build large, powerful, and disciplined mobilizational systems by the modular addition of clan to clan and tribe to tribe.

But ties of kinship depended on trust and were easily broken. So the most powerful mobilizational systems in Inner Eurasia braced ties of kinship with more impersonal ties of mutual advantage, service, and military discipline. Temujin was a master at reinforcing or replacing ties of kinship with more

reliable ties of fealty and mutual advantage to build a loyal and disciplined following. By skillfully balancing rewards (derived from large flows of resources from agrarian regions or trade) and discipline (based on the leader's power to promote, demote, and even execute followers), Temujin's *keshig*, his group of immediate followers, set a benchmark for elite discipline that would shape politics in the region for many centuries.

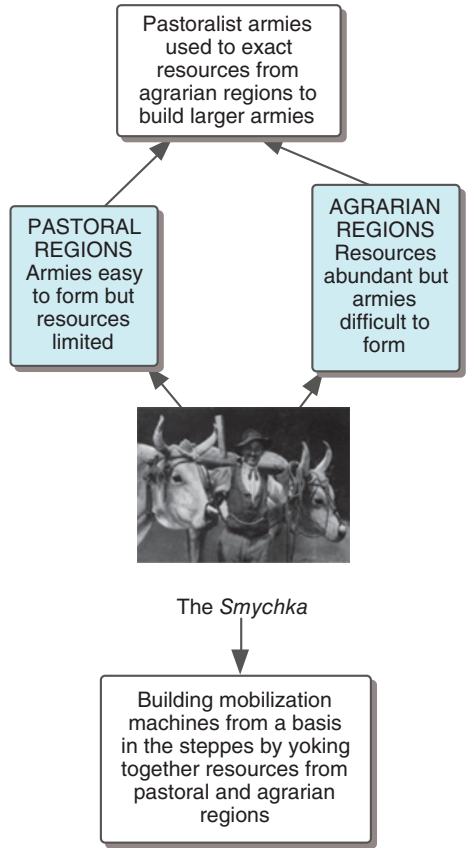
The great North African Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) used the Arabic term *asabiyya* to capture the importance of elite cohesion and discipline. In 1401, during the siege of Damascus, he explained to Timur (who already understood this perfectly well) that “[s]overeignty exists only because of group loyalty (“*asabiyya*”), and the greater the number in the group, the greater is the extent of sovereignty.”<sup>41</sup> The extraordinarily high level of discipline within the Mongol elite would find an eerie echo seven centuries later in the astonishing elite discipline of the Stalinist *nomenklatura*.

Elite discipline is important in all mobilizational systems. But it was peculiarly important in Inner Eurasia, where potential targets were well defended, surpluses were smaller, resources and potential allies were dispersed, politics was volatile, and institutional structures were fragile. Here, mobilizing large flows of resources meant exerting exceptional pressure over large areas, and in mobilizational systems, as in steam engines, the amount of pressure that could be exerted depended on the strength and resilience of the container. Too much pressure, and a mobilizational system, like a boiler, could burst. But an elite riveted together by a leader with charisma, and the skill needed to balance rewards and punishment, could generate enormous pressure and mobilize vast resources even from bases in the relatively impoverished lands of Inner Eurasia.

## THE *SMYCHKA*: YOKING TOGETHER STEPPE ARMIES AND AGRARIAN RESOURCES

A simple metaphor or model may help bring together these ideas on the distinctive challenges of mobilizing in the Inner Eurasian steppes. In the 1920s, Soviet leaders talked of building socialism by “yoking together” the proletariat and peasantry, just as peasant farmers yoked teams of oxen or horses behind a plow. They called this “yoking together” a *smychka*. (See Chapter 13.)

Pastoral nomadic mobilization systems in Inner Eurasia also depended on a sort of *smychka* that yoked together two large social beasts: armies from the steppes, and wealth generators from agrarian regions. As Anatoly Khazanov, Thomas Barfield, Nicola Di Cosmo, and others have shown, the most successful steppe rulers built large and disciplined armies that could mobilize large flows of resources from wealthy agrarian regions. Like the peasant's plow-team, the Inner Eurasian *smychka* yoked together social beasts that would otherwise have grazed separately. Indeed, this is why it makes sense to describe the large political systems created so many times in the steppes as “empires,” or polities that ruled over peoples with very different cultural, ecological, and historical traditions.



**Figure 1.4** Diagrammatic representation of the *smychka*.

But to hold a *smychka* together, you needed a strong yoke and a skillful driver. If the first two components of the *smychka* were steppe armies and agrarian wealth, the third was elite discipline. Without the yoke and the whip, the two beasts headed off in different directions and plowing ceased. No steppe empire could survive long without a high level of elite discipline and cohesion. The peculiar importance of good leadership under the difficult mobilizational conditions that existed in Inner Eurasia helps explain a persistent bias towards autocratic rule in many regions of Inner Eurasia. (Figure 1.4.)

Because historians have normally focused on state formation in agrarian regions, the metaphor of a *smychka* may seem back-to-front. But thinking in this slightly counter-intuitive way can highlight some distinctive features of Inner Eurasia’s political history. For example, the idea of the *smychka* emphasizes the geographical, cultural, ethnic, and political division between the armies that mobilized Inner Eurasian resources and the farmers, traders, and city-dwellers who produced most of these resources. Yoking these groups together was never easy, so another distinctive feature of the *smychka* is the

sustained cultural tension between different regions. This is a feature that steppe empires share with modern empires in so far as both are large mobilizational systems in which outlying regions differ in their cultural and historical heritage from the mobilizational heartlands. No steppe empires managed to generate a sense of solidarity that could bridge such deep ecological, cultural, and ethnic chasms. And, as sociologists from the time of Durkheim have argued, building durable or stable polities from components that do not share basic religious, cultural, or political norms is extremely difficult. The failure of the traditional steppe *smychka* to build widely accepted forms of legitimacy was one of its main weaknesses, and we will see many examples of the political fissures this could cause.

Of course, the cultural divide was far from absolute, which points to another important feature of the *smychka*. Its two lead animals were forced into close contact and over time they adapted to each other's habits and ways of doing things. In addition to wealth, people, and resources, the *smychka* mobilized consumer goods, knowledge, technologies, and cultural goods, including religions. We will see that agrarian regions, such as Muscovy, learnt much about politics, mobilization, and warfare from steppeland overlords. But even more cultural and economic wealth flowed in the opposite direction.

As Juvaini wrote of the Mongols in the imperial period:

all the merchandise that is brought from the West is borne unto them, and that which is bound in the farthest East is untied in their houses; wallets and purses are filled from their treasuries, and their everyday garments are studded with jewels and embroidered with gold...<sup>42</sup>

The Mongol military machine mobilized the military skills of Chinese military engineers, including their use of gunpowder weapons, particularly bombs, often fired by trebuchets, and "fire-lances." They may even have used the first true guns, which recent evidence suggests were invented in the Xia Xia state while Chinggis Khan was alive.<sup>43</sup> The Mongol bureaucracy mobilized the bureaucratic skills of the Uighurs, and the fiscal skills of Muslim merchants. Religious traditions, too, circulated within pastoral nomadic empires, and were inspected carefully for their political and ideological value.

Over time, pastoral nomadic elites adopted many of the technologies, consumer goods, and cultural goods of the agrarian world, and gradually habits of consumption and even prayer began to transform the culture and lifeways of the steppes, and particularly the steppe elites. At least since the time of the Khazar Empire, late in the first millennium, some pastoral nomadic elites had converted to religions from the agrarian world. These cultural transfers suggest some of the ways in which steppe empires decayed. The traditions of the agrarian world had their greatest impact on pastoralist elites, and over time they could divide khans from the herders who made up their armies. Pastoralist leaders who became too used to the cities from which they drew most of their wealth, and to the silks, wines, and religious traditions of the agrarian world, could quickly lose their grip on steppeland armies, as the agrarian and steppeland drivers of the *smychka* began to pull in different directions.

Finally, the metaphor of a *smychka* highlights the importance of the constantly shifting balance of power between pastoral and agrarian regions. The *smychka* required military superiority, so it was difficult to operate in regions such as Central Asia, where pastoralist groups were divided and the balance of power between farmers and pastoralists was more even. Particularly in the more urbanized regions of Central Asia, the balance of power between agrarian and steppe regions was so stable for so long that the *smychka*'s two beasts constantly butted heads, creating a perpetual stasis. The most favorable configuration for a successful *smychka* was when steppe armies had a clear military superiority over nearby agrarian regions from which they mobilized.

### *THE FINAL YEARS OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE*

The Mongol Empire was the most powerful mobilizational machine of this kind ever created in Inner Eurasia. But it, too, shows the brittleness typical of the *smychka*. The empire nearly fractured during the short reign of Guyug (r. 1246–1248). But it held together during the reign of Mongke (r. 1251–1259), who had inherited some of the political skills of his grandfather, Chinggis Khan.<sup>44</sup> After his election in 1251, Mongke launched a brutal purge of the Chaghatayid and Ogodeid lines, descendants of Chinggis Khan's middle sons. As many as 300 Chinggisid nobles and commanders may have been tried and executed, after being hunted down by military search parties organized in huge military nooses as if for *battue* hunts.<sup>45</sup>

For a decade, Mongke balanced rewards and discipline skillfully to maintain elite discipline, and the empire continued to expand during two new campaigns of conquest that generated the vast flows of resources described by Juvaini. The first campaign, under Mongke's brother, Qubilai, invaded southern China. The second, under another brother, Hulegu (1217–1265), conquered Persia and parts of Mesopotamia. Both campaigns yielded huge rivers of booty that could be redistributed to regional elites. Government officials collected resources and booty at strategic urban centers, under the supervision of three secretariats, one in Beijing, one in Besh-Baligh, and one in Transoxiana.<sup>46</sup> The western regions, ruled by Mongke's cousin, Batu, were less tightly integrated into the system. But even Batu, by now the senior Chinggisid, accepted Mongke's authority and participated in his military campaigns. In August 1253, Batu's officials told William of Rubruck that, "Baatu [Batu] has no power to do without Mangu Chan's [Mongke Khan's] consent. So you and your interpreter must go to Mangu Chan [Mongke Khan]."<sup>47</sup> They were not making this up. Perhaps because he was aware that major sources of booty might be drying up, Mongke was meaner with the empire's wealth than his predecessors. So, when Batu requested 10,000 ingots of silver to buy pearls, Mongke sent him 1,000, as a loan against future grants, along with a lecture on thrift.<sup>48</sup>

In 1259 the Mongol Empire seemed more powerful than ever before. A year later, it did not exist. Mongke's sudden death in August 1259 illustrated the key role of leadership in the *smychka*, because immediately after his death the system sheared apart, splitting from top to bottom.

## NOTES

- 1 Rashid al-Din Tabib, *Compendium of Chronicles*, 21.
- 2 A recent survey is Liu, "Regional Study."
- 3 On the centrality of Islamic civilization by the thirteenth century, see Cook, "The Centrality of Islamic Civilization."
- 4 A recent survey is Biran, "The Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange."
- 5 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*.
- 6 The metaphor comes from Sherratt, "Reviving the Grand Narrative."
- 7 On Mongol relations with their merchant partners, see Allsen, "Mongol Princes and their Merchant Partners"; and the article on *ortog* in Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 429–430.
- 8 On Rabban Sauma, see Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanadu*.
- 9 Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 140, 152; lengthy extracts from Pegolotti's handbook appear on 143–173.
- 10 On Ibn Battuta's journey, see Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*.
- 11 Population figures for this paragraph are from McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 18, 78–79, 122, 157–169.
- 12 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 358–360, 362; Figure III.1 (246) shows sharply increasing growth rates from c.900–1200, and Figure III.5a (250) shows warmer climates also from c.900 CE.
- 13 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 359.
- 14 Pederson, Hess, Baatarbileg, Anchukaitis, and Di Cosmo, "Pluvials."
- 15 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 369.
- 16 Khazanov, "Pastoral Nomadic Migrations," 360.
- 17 Khazanov, "Pastoral Nomadic Migrations," 360–362.
- 18 Juvaini, *The History*, 22.
- 19 Allsen, "Spiritual Geography"; and Juvaini, *The History*, 54–55.
- 20 On Karakorum, see Kiselev and Merpert, "Iz istorii Kara-Korum"; De Rachewiltz, *The Secret History*, 2: 988 and 1004–1007; Rubruck, *The Mission*, 221; Phillips, *The Mongols*, 96–103; Yingsheng, "Eastern Central Asia," 4: 583.
- 21 Juvaini, *The History*, 212–213.
- 22 On the mobilization of captive labor, see Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*.
- 23 As noted in Allsen, "Spiritual Geography," 122–123.
- 24 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 221; there is an interesting discussion of Karakorum in Olschki, *Guillaume Boucher*, 10–16.
- 25 Allsen, "Spiritual Geography," 124.
- 26 Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 92.
- 27 For more recent work on Karakorum, see L. K. Minert, "Drevneishie pamiatniki mongol'skogo monumental'nogo zodchestva"; and R. S. Minert, "Mongol'skoe gradostroitel'stvo XIII–XIV vekov."
- 28 Guyug was not quite a supreme ruler, as he failed to enforce his authority over Batu, so he is referred to in the major Persian sources as a "khan" rather than as a "kaghan," the title assumed by Ogodei at his enthronement in 1229; Fletcher, "The Mongols."
- 29 Juvaini, *The History*, 248–251; De Rachewiltz, *The Secret History*, 2: 728, argues that the *quriltai* took place near Karakorum.
- 30 Juvaini, *The History*, 248–251.
- 31 Biran, *Chinggis Khan*, 85.
- 32 Cited in Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 128.



- 33 Sneath, “Mobility,” 224–225.
- 34 Sneath, “Mobility,” 223.
- 35 On the “topos” of steppe nomads as “natural warriors,” and some warnings about its limitations, see Di Cosmo, *Warfare in Inner Asian History*, 1–29, partic. 3–12; Khazanov, “Pastoral Nomadic Migrations,” 362–363; and Rogers, “Warfare.”
- 36 Rogers, “Warfare,” 147, citing Colin Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire According to the T’ang Dynastic Histories* (Canberra: ANU, 1972), 111.
- 37 The pervasiveness of systems of ranking in the steppes underpins the argument of the Soviet scholar Vladimirtsov, that steppeland relationships can be described as “feudal”; Vladimirtsov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*.
- 38 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*.
- 39 Di Cosmo, “State Formation.”
- 40 Biran, *Qaidu*, 7; and see also Jackson, “From ulus to Khanate.”
- 41 Cited in Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 173.
- 42 Juvaini, *The History*, 22.
- 43 Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*, Ch. 3.
- 44 For a more detailed account of the system, see Chapters 15 and 16 of Volume 1 of this history of Inner Eurasia.
- 45 Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 33; Rubruck, *The Mission*, 169; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 363.
- 46 Dardess, “From Mongol Empire,” 121.
- 47 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 134; it is possible that Batu was being either disingenuous or politic in playing down his own power and independence.
- 48 Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 58.

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## [2] 1260–1350: UNRAVELING AND THE BUILDING OF NEW POLITIES

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The Mongol Empire illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the Inner Eurasian *smychka*. Given effective leadership, the main factors limiting Mongol power were the ability to hold alliances together as the empire expanded across Inner Eurasia, and the need to maintain the flow of resources that glued the system together (Figure 2.1; Map 2.1). Successful wars mobilized large amounts of booty that could be distributed to regional leaders, while the Mongols were fortunate in having several very capable rulers, beginning with Temujin himself. The good fortune and political virtuosity of Chinggis Khan help explain the early successes of the empire, not just because he juggled predation and alliance-building with such skill, but also because he had the foresight to nominate Ogodei as his successor.

### *THE BREAKUP OF THE UNIFIED MONGOL EMPIRE: 1260*

Khan Mongke died suddenly on August 11, 1259, campaigning in Sichuan province in China. The empire fell apart almost immediately. With no obvious successor to Mongke, the empire split along genealogical fault lines, as different Chinggisid princes asserted their authority over their home territories or *uluses* to form four smaller empires: in China and Mongolia, Central Asia, the western region later known as the Golden Horde, and the Il-Khanate in Persia.

The Chinggisid family (Figure 2.2) understood the breakup as a partitioning of the family business, and they also understood exactly when it occurred. Forty-five years later, in 1305, Il-Khan Oljeitu (r. 1304–1316), the Chinggisid ruler of Persia and great-grandson of the Il-Khanate's founder, Hulegu, wrote to King Philippe IV of France that, "We, ... descendants of Chinggis Khaqan should put an end to the vituperation which had been going on for forty-five years up to now."<sup>1</sup>

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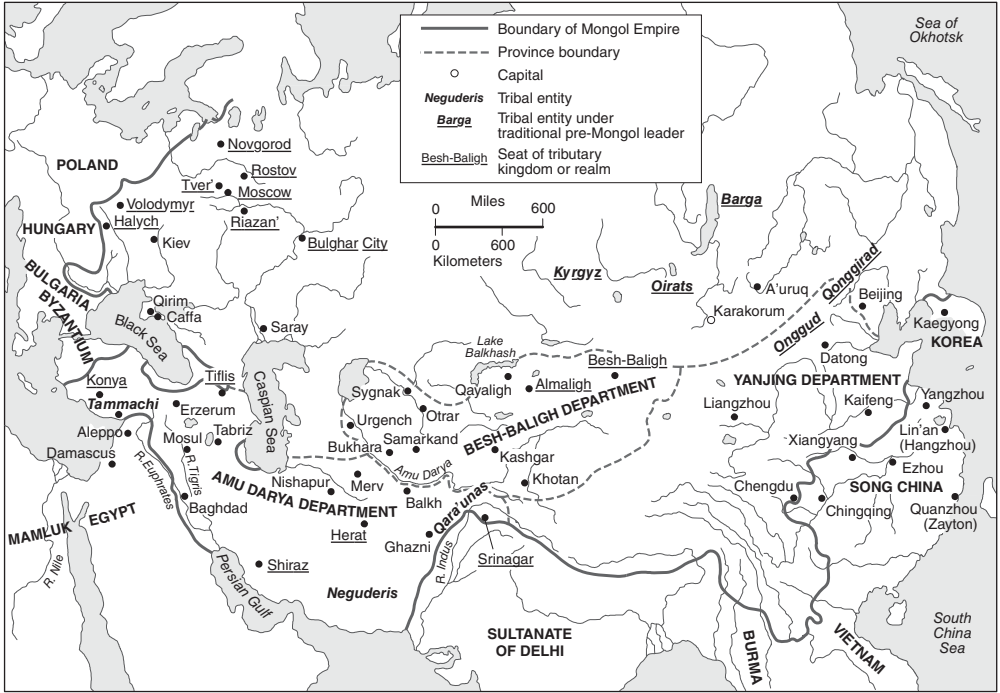
*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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**Figure 2.1** Photograph of part of Baldugin Sharav’s painting, *One Day in Mongolia*. Courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh.

Explaining the breakup is not hard. Mongke, unlike Chinggis Khan, had failed to appoint a successor, so that no one was ready and prepared to hold the system together after his death. Those who survived him had to put most of their efforts into defending their own *uluses*, and differences between the *uluses* magnified conflicts within the family. Particularly deep were the differences between regions with large agrarian populations, such as China and Persia, and the largely pastoralist *uluses* of Inner Eurasia. Besides, the ruling family itself was changing. Its younger members had become accustomed to the wealth and luxuries of the agrarian world, and none had the ambition, the determination, the ruthlessness, or perhaps the sheer luck of Chinggis Khan.



Map 2.1 The Mongol Empire at its height in 1250. Adapted from Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 366.

But these are relatively superficial reasons for the breakup, and the empire could surely have survived longer if it had not begun to run out of resources. The empire was now so huge that it was difficult to coordinate its different armies, or move revenues and officials across the empire. Even more important, the huge flows of resources and people that had held the empire together in the past were beginning to dry up. There were no longer any easy conquests to be had after the conquest of Persia. Even if Mongke had survived, further

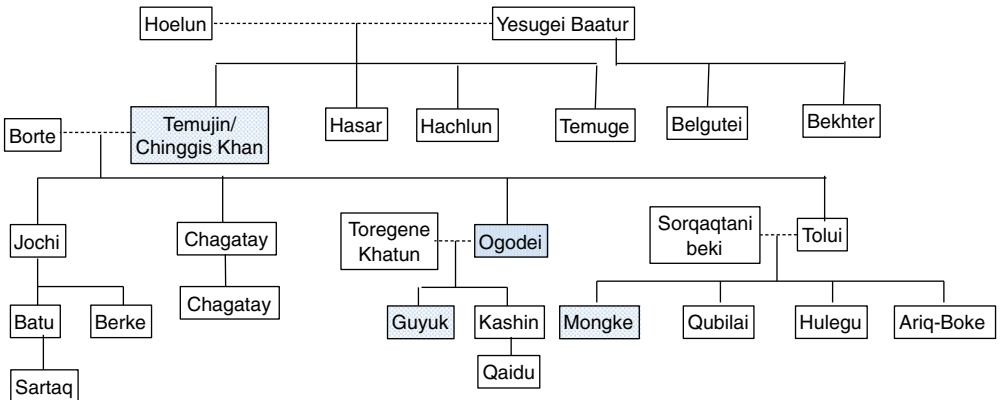


Figure 2.2 Genealogy of Chinggis Khan's family (shading = Supreme Khans).

conquests would prove as tough and as expensive as the China campaigns in which he perished. Little now held the empire together apart from the prestige and authority of Mongke himself, which is why the empire unraveled so fast after his death.

Here, we will largely ignore the Outer Eurasian *uluses* of China and Persia, and focus on the Inner Eurasian *uluses* that emerged in Mongolia, Central Asia, and the Pontic steppes. The histories of the Inner Eurasian *uluses* would be shaped largely by their geography, and by the skills and fortunes of their leaders. Above all, their fate would depend on the capacity of rulers to sustain regional flows of resources large enough to support regional versions of the *smychka*.

## *THE LEFT WING: MONGOLIA AND YUAN CHINA*

We begin with Mongolia, the heartland and driver of the Mongol Empire. While it might have seemed natural for power to drift back to this region, that did not happen. Never again would Mongolia generate as much mobilizational power as in the thirteenth century.

In the far east of Inner Eurasia, the borders between forest, steppe, and arable lands are clearer and less negotiable than in most other regions. North of Mongolia lie the forests of eastern Siberia, which were populated by foragers and herders with limited but valuable resources such as furs. Mongolia, lying between Siberia and the Gobi desert, was a large region of hilly steppe that had been settled by pastoralists since the second millennium BCE. South of the Gobi desert lay more pasturelands in the Ordos region, as well as the rich farming regions of greater China. Along China's northern borders, pastoralists and farmers met in the most sustained trans-ecological confrontation anywhere in the world. Geography and ecology would play a determining role in the battle for control of the Chinggisid family business in the east.

In accordance with steppe tradition, Ariq-Boke (d. 1266), the youngest son of Chinggis Khan's youngest son, Tolui, inherited the family's Mongolian homeland. This gave him control of the capital, Karakorum. He also acquired Mongke's great seal, which was passed to him by one of Mongke's officials. Within weeks of Mongke's death Ariq-Boke summoned a *quriltai* to elect a new khagan. But if he hoped to replace Mongke, geography was against him.

The breakup of the empire cut the northward flow of resources from China, which was now controlled by Ariq-Boke's elder brother, Qubilai (1215–1294). Qubilai had been campaigning with Mongke in southern China and excused himself from attending the *quriltai* summoned by Ariq-Boke on military grounds. But when Ariq-Boke began moving troops to north China, Qubilai abandoned the campaign against the Song and headed north, in a strategic retreat that may have postponed the final conquest of south China for two decades.<sup>2</sup> In April 1260, Qubilai summoned a separate *quriltai* at his northern capital of Kaiping (Marco Polo's Shangdu and Coleridge's Xanadu), 10 days north of the future capital, Beijing. After three ritual refusals to take the throne, Qubilai declared himself Mongke's successor as khagan. Ariq-Boke immediately had himself elected khagan at a second *quriltai* in Karakorum,

apparently with the support of Batu's brother, Berke (r. 1257–1267), now khan of the western regions later included within the Golden Horde. Mongke's other brother, Hulegu, now the ruler of Persia, supported Qubilai. These alliances, formed on either side of the ecological fault lines between the empire's Inner Eurasian and Outer Eurasian territories, would prove remarkably durable.

In the east, there followed a four-year civil war. Though Ariq-Boke controlled the symbols of power, Qubilai controlled much greater human and material resources. To make things worse, Ariq-Boke failed to secure control of the Central Asian *ulus* that had once been held by Chagatay, Chinggis Khan's second son. That forced him to mobilize soldiers and resources from Mongolia, Western Xinjiang, and the Yenisei region. In a world of low productivity, the Yenisei region was important because, as Rashid noted, it had many cities as well as many nomads. It also produced iron and iron implements, including weapons and agricultural tools, and had regions of irrigated agriculture, where wheat, barley, and millet were grown, and settlements in which Chinese artisans produced textiles.<sup>3</sup>

But Qubilai had China. He also inherited the Mongolian army that had been fighting the Song. He showed how uneven the balance of resources was by the simple expedient of canceling the caravans carrying Chinese provisions to Karakorum. This caused an immediate and devastating famine in the Mongolian capital.<sup>4</sup> Late in 1260, Qubilai's forces occupied much of Mongolia.

Ariq-Boke's increasingly desperate attempts to mobilize resources from his under-resourced *ulus* eventually alienated potential allies. He appointed Alghu, a grandson of Chagatay, as khan of Central Asia. But Alghu, stung by massive requisitions for the war against Qubilai, declared his independence, depriving Ariq-Boke of the richest of all his territories. Ariq-Boke tried to reconquer Central Asia in a campaign so brutal that it devastated large regions and caused a massive famine. According to the historian Bartold,

Ariq-böge's troops seized so much corn in the fertile Ili valley [in 1263] that throughout the winter the horses were fed on it. Such pillage caused a terrible famine in the country, and in the long run proved disastrous to the army, for in the spring of 1264 the horses, accustomed to corn, sickened and died from green fodder. In these circumstances, Ariq-böge was abandoned by most of his generals who disliked him for his cruelty.<sup>5</sup>

In the spring of 1264, Mongke's son, Urung Tash, demanded the jade seal or *tamga* of his father, then traveled to China and submitted to Qubilai.<sup>6</sup> Qubilai easily repelled Ariq-Boke's attacks on northern China, and in 1264 Ariq-Boke submitted to Qubilai, was forgiven (unlike most of his lieutenants), and died two years later, in 1266.<sup>7</sup> Qubilai now controlled Mongolia and China, and enjoyed the symbolic support of the Il-Khanate. In 1271 he proclaimed the start of the new Yuan dynasty. But he would never gain the support of Batu's realm, the Golden Horde, and he also failed in a 20-year campaign to control Chagatay's former *ulus* in Central Asia and Xinjiang.

In 1266 Qubilai moved his capital from Karakorum to Daidu (Beijing). After little more than 30 years in the Eurasian limelight, Karakorum became once



more a provincial steppe settlement. The power, prestige, and wealth that had flowed into Mongolia under the unified empire now ebbed out again, leaving Mongolia as little more than a remote Chinese colony. It was important as a base for warfare with Central Asia, as a supplier of horses, and as a symbol of the Yuan dynasty's steppe origins, but it was no longer an independent power. The government planted garrisons in Mongolia, and supported them by the forced settlement of Chinese farmers along the Kerulen river; at Chingqai, near modern Uliastay, 250 miles west of Karakorum; and near Karakorum itself. Along the Kerulen river, Chinese farmers lived "in sod huts on the banks, growing wheat and hemp, and ice-fishing in the wintertime."<sup>8</sup> In 1307, just 100 years after the great *quriltai* at which Temujin was proclaimed Chinggis Khan, Mongolia became a province of Yuan China, with the name of Ling-pei, and Karakorum became a mere provincial capital.

Mongolia did not flourish under the Yuan. Trade ceased almost entirely, funds for the post-horse system dried up, and most of the towns and artisan colonies founded in the imperial era disappeared.<sup>9</sup> The Mongolian historian Gongor writes that, "After their retreat into the homeland, the Mongol feudal lords lost the large-scale tribute that China had paid, and the result was an ever-increasing level of exploitation of their native subjects."<sup>10</sup> A trickle of resources still flowed into Mongolia from China's Mongolian ruling elite, and as early as the summer of 1261, Qubilai sent relief supplies to Karakorum.<sup>11</sup> But for a century, Mongolia was the only region of Inner Eurasia more or less permanently ruled from Outer Eurasia.

Mongolian soldiers and nobles fared better in China than in Mongolia, particularly after Qubilai granted Mongols the highest status within his lands. Qubilai encouraged the Mongol elite to wear traditional Mongol clothing, and he took part in traditional Mongolian hunts on his visits to Shangdu. Official banquets were celebrated in imperial Mongol style, with huge amounts of alcohol.<sup>12</sup> However, not all Mongols in China lived well. Marco Polo described how Mongolian garrison troops supported themselves from "the immense herds of cattle that are assigned to them and on the milk which they send into the towns to sell in return for necessary provisions."<sup>13</sup>

Emigration stripped Mongolia of its nobility and most of its soldiers. When the Yuan dynasty collapsed in 1368, as many as 60,000 Mongols, many of them deeply Sinicized, fled back to Mongolia with the remnants of the Yuan court.<sup>14</sup> Under the Ming, Mongolia lost even the symbolic prestige it had enjoyed under the Yuan dynasty. In 1388, Ming armies crushed a Yuan army near Lake Buyr and destroyed Karakorum. But the return of so many Mongols from China undoubtedly created a cultural leaven that would eventually allow new attempts to form unified Mongolian armies and polities.

## *THE CENTER: CENTRAL ASIA AND XINJIANG*

The complex ecological checkerboard of Central Asia and Xinjiang, where farming oases and trading cities alternated with steppeland and desert, explains why it was so difficult to build a stable *smychka* in the region.

## THE CHAGATAY ULUS

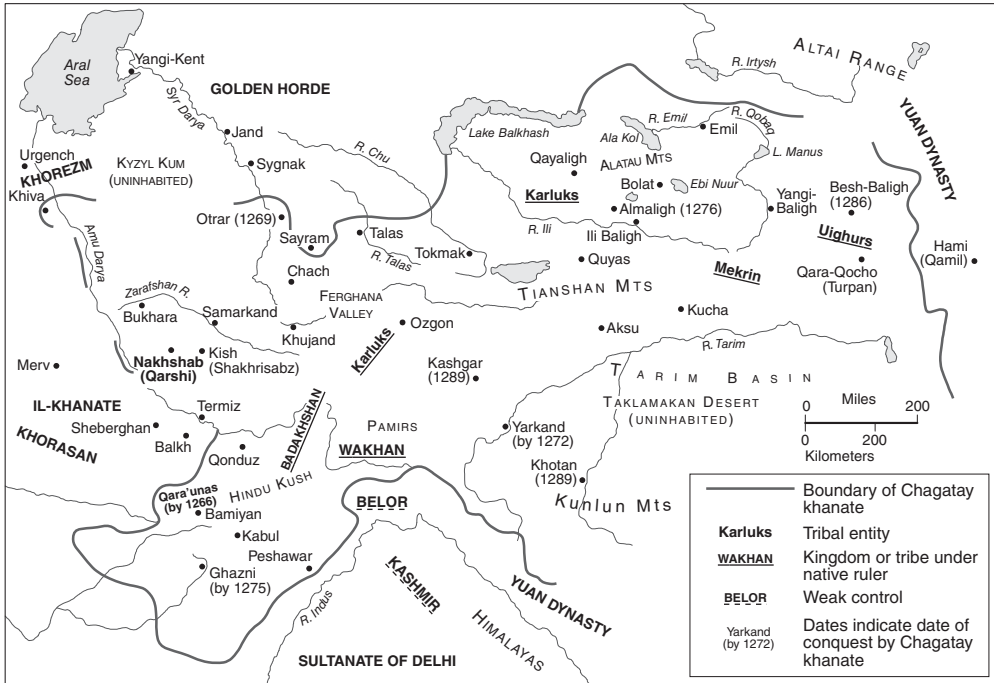
North of Central Asia lay the vast woodlands of western Siberia. To their south, the Kazakh steppes extended for 3,000 miles from the Urals and the Caspian Sea to the Altai and Tienshan ranges, and from southern Siberia to the oases of Transoxiana. Here, most pastoralists nomadized north in the summer and south in the winter, or practiced forms of transhumance in the mountainous regions of the Semirechie north of the Tienshan mountains. They often traded with, ruled, or exacted tributes from the cities along the Syr Darya river. The pasturelands of Semirechie (in modern Kazakhstan) and Zungharia (in northwestern Xinjiang) extended from Talas to the Altai and eastwards towards Uighuristan. They contained some fertile regions that supported major trading towns, such as Turfan and Hami, which effectively controlled access to China. Semirechie and Zungharia, which contained rich agrarian regions and flourishing towns, constituted, along with the Volga delta and the Crimea, some of the most valuable and hotly contested regions of steppeland in Inner Eurasia.

South of the Kazakh steppes, but divided by the Pamir mountains, lay the urbanized oases of Transoxiana to the west and the Tarim basin to the east in modern Xinjiang. All were watered by rivers flowing from glaciers high in the mountains, and most lay between the base of the mountains and regions of steppe or desert. Because they were separated by regions of desert and steppe, Central Asia's rich trading cities rarely managed to unite, so they were vulnerable to steppe armies. Here, any *smychka* linking pastoralist military power and urban commercial power was likely to be unstable because pastoralists, too, were divided by geography.

Beatrice Manz offers a fine short summary of the ecology of Transoxiana:

The Oxus [Amu Darya] region contains both excellent farmland and steppe, and these moreover are often interspersed. Even within rich and irrigated agricultural areas ... there is much land which is suitable only for nomadic exploitation. The many rivers of the region create large areas of brackish marshland, useful for nomads wintering in the lowland steppes. Almost no part of this region moreover is distant from the mountains whose foothills provide summer pastures. ... The nomads of the Ulus lived in close contact with its settled population, whom they controlled and exploited directly. They knew the value and the requirements of the agricultural and urban economies, and were able to deal easily with the leaders of the settled communities under their control.<sup>15</sup>

East of Transoxiana and south of the Tienshan mountains lay the Tarim basin. Surrounded by mountains that provided abundant snow-melt, and with the harsh and almost impenetrable Taklamakan desert at its heart, the Tarim basin formed a ring of irrigated oases within which prosperous trading city-states had emerged. Though usually independent, these cities often paid tributes either to pastoralists from Zungharia or to officials from China. In Central Asia, in a neat illustration of the geography of the *smychka*, military power could be found in the steppelands of Zungharia, Semirechie, or Transoxiana, while most of the region's material, human, commercial, and cultural wealth lay in the urbanized lands to the south.



Map 2.2 The Chagatay khanate in 1331. Adapted from Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 84.

At the height of Mongol power, much of this region fell within a single *ulus*, that of Chinggis Khan’s second son, Chagatay (1183–1242). By personal and cultural preference, Chagatay controlled his domains from the steppelands of Zungharia (Map 2.2). According to Juvaini:

In spring and summer he had his quarters in Almaligh and Quyas, which in those seasons resembled the Garden of Iram. He constructed large pools ... in that region for the flocking of the waterfowl ... at every stage, from beginning to end he laid up stores of food and drink.<sup>16</sup>

Controlling the *ulus* from Zungharia made sense for a ruler who grew up in the steppes. It also made military and political sense, as long as the armies and administrators of the unified empire, such as the very able governor of Transoxiana, Mas’ud Beg (d. 1289, son of Chinggis Khan’s appointee, Mahmud Yalavach (fl. 1218–1252)), could hold the *smychka* together by transferring revenues from Central Asia’s cities towards their steppelands. However, the violent purge that followed Mongke’s accession in 1251 removed most princes of the Chagatayid and Ogodeid lines and ruined the towns of Zungharia. Of the Tarbagatay mountains, near Quyas, William of Rubruck wrote in the 1250s, “There used to be sizeable towns lying in the plain, but they were for the most part completely destroyed so that the Tartars could pasture there, since the area affords very fine grazing lands.”<sup>17</sup> Barthold claimed that the region did

not return to early thirteenth-century levels of urbanization before the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

As we have seen, Chagatay's grandson, Alghu, asserted his independence of Ariq-Boke almost immediately after being granted authority over Transoxiana. Like his grandfather, Alghu ruled from the Qayaliq/Almaliq region of Zung-haria where he could assemble pastoralist armies.<sup>19</sup> By 1263 Alghu had gained the support of Transoxiana's governor, Mas'ud Beg. The link between Alghu and Mas'ud Beg recreated the *smychka* by giving Alghu a firm grip on resource flows from the southern cities.

Alghu also attempted to expand west of the Amu Darya into territory claimed by the Il-Khanate, in modern Turkmenistan and Khorasan. These regions, in the north-east of modern Iran and the north of Afghanistan, offered a promising "looting zone": a borderland region that could provide occasional booty without the costs of formal rule. Here armies could be kept busy and their commanders could find temporary pasture lands and booty. At his death in 1265/6, Alghu seemed well on the way to recreating the Chagatay *ulus* by building a new *smychka* that could balance the key elements of the Central Asian *smychka*, with its steppe armies, city-states, flows of commercial wealth, and looting zones.

## QAIDU (1235/6–1301)

The next 40 years would be dominated by the figure of Qaidu (1235/6–1301), a grandson of Ogodei. In 1252, Mongke granted Qaidu pastures in Ogodei's former *ulus*, near the town of Qayaliq in Zungharia. William of Rubruck, who stayed in Qayaliq for 12 days in November 1253, described it as "a large town ... containing a bazaar to which merchants resorted in large numbers."<sup>20</sup> This was a region rich in grazing, fishing, and hunting lands, with a few small commercial towns.<sup>21</sup> With these limited resources Qaidu built a traditional nomadic following. According to one source, he scolded Qubilai for betraying Mongol tradition, saying, "The old customs of our dynasty are not those of the Han laws."<sup>22</sup> Like Chinggis Khan and Ogodei, Qaidu remained true to Mongol religious traditions, though he also tolerated other religions.<sup>23</sup> Most of his subjects were probably Muslims, though there were also Nestorian Christians in the major cities, and Buddhists in Qayaliq and Hami.

After Alghu's death in 1265–1266, and a brief civil war with Alghu's successor, Baraq, Qaidu was recognized as khan of the Chagatay *ulus* in 1269. He immediately gained the support of Khan Mengu-Temur, the ruler of Batu's former *ulus* in western Inner Eurasia. The treaty of 1269, at which Baraq accepted Qaidu's authority, shows that Qaidu had a sophisticated understanding of the Central Asian *smychka*. In the 1250s, as governor of Transoxiana, Mas'ud Beg had restored the wealth of the region's cities after the devastating Mongol wars of conquest. He rebuilt irrigation systems, stabilized the currency, and checked looting by nomadic armies. But much of his work was undone during the conflicts after Mongke's death. Qaidu appreciated Mas'ud Beg's achievements and knew how important it was to protect the region's cities even from his own armies. In their 1269 treaty Qaidu and Baraq swore an oath "on gold," that,

“henceforth they would dwell in the mountains and plains and not hang around cities, or graze their animals in cultivated areas, or make exorbitant demands on the peasants.”<sup>24</sup> Baraq was encouraged to direct his forces towards the looting zones of neighboring Khorasan, while Qaidu’s troops harried another looting zone east of Zungharia, in the borderlands of Uighuristan contested by Qubilai.

In 1271, after the death of Baraq, Qaidu was enthroned in Talas as khan of the Chagatay *ulus*. Though Qubilai claimed to be khagan of all the Mongol realms, Qaidu made no attempt to seek Qubilai’s blessing. In the same year, Mas’ud Beg pledged allegiance to Qaidu. Qaidu left him in charge of the cities of Transoxiana until his death in 1289, when Mas’ud Beg’s sons succeeded him.<sup>25</sup> After 1282, when Baraq’s eldest son, Du’a, accepted Qaidu’s overall authority, there followed almost a quarter of a century of relative stability. Peace and the protection of the cities that produced most of the *ulus*’s wealth and much of its military equipment stimulated an economic revival.

John Dardess describes well how the Central Asian *smychka* worked in this period.

This renewed policy of peace and order within the Mongols’ Central Asian realm and the return of the princes to the steppe zone allowed the Medium Imperium to maintain preparedness and discipline among its steppe warriors. The princes as war leaders could give constant personal attention to their nomad cavalry. At the same time, supplies and revenues could be regularly drawn from their sedentary economic dependencies, since these were once again protected from casual pillage or irregular and excessive exactions. The military energies of the princes and their armies, no longer committed to plunder and internecine war at home, could instead be directed to war and plunder across the frontiers.<sup>26</sup>

In Transoxiana, Qaidu delegated the administration of taxation to Mas’ud Beg, who ruled through local kings or *maliks*. The *maliks* apparently retained considerable independence, for most of the region’s coinage was issued in their names. On the eastern and western fringes of his territory, in Uighuristan and the border with Khorasan, looting was the most effective form of wealth mobilization, while also providing training and experience for Qaidu’s armies and keeping them away from the region’s major cities. Sustained, low-grade warfare in Uighuristan may have yielded considerable booty, though it also reduced trade along the Silk Roads, which encouraged Chinese merchants to shift towards the Indian Ocean sea routes.<sup>27</sup>

On his eastern borders, Qaidu withstood two decades of sustained pressure from Qubilai. He was protected in part by the length of the supply lines from China. In the late 1280s, Yuan forces began to pull back. Chinese soldiers, farmers, and artisans were allowed to return from the Tarim basin cities to north China, and in 1289, the “Bureau of Pacification” in Khotan was closed.<sup>28</sup>

## THE CHAGATAY *ULUS* AFTER QAIDU

Qaidu died in 1301. He was succeeded by Baraq’s son, Du’a, after a brief conflict with Qaidu’s own son, Chabar. In 1303, Du’a and Chabar made peace with

Qubilai's Yuan successor, Temür, then sent a delegation to Oljeitu, the Persian Il-Khan, who immediately joined a new, but largely symbolic treaty between the major Chinggisid *uluses*. Like the 1991 treaty establishing a "Commonwealth of Independent States" after the breakup of the USSR, this did not recreate the former empire, but formally acknowledged its dissolution.

Under Qaidu's successors, the fragile unity of the Chagatay *ulus* broke down as rulers abandoned the steppelands, settled in the cities, and turned to the most dynamic cultural and religious traditions of neighboring agrarian regions, those of Islam. Du'a ruled from a base in Transoxiana. Kebeg (r. 1309, 1318–1326) built a residence at Nakshab (Qarshi) near Samarkand, and began for the first time to issue coins with his own name.<sup>29</sup> Though not a Muslim, he was sympathetic to Islam. Ibn Battuta, who visited the region in 1333, writes that, though an infidel, Kebeg was "just in government, showing equity to the oppressed and favor and respect to the Muslims."

Kebeg's successor, Tarmashirin (1326–1334), also lived in Transoxiana, but converted to Islam. Ibn Battuta met Tarmashirin in the spring of 1333, and described him as "a man of great distinction, possessed of numerous troops and regiments of cavalry, a vast kingdom and immense power." He found him living in a large camp or *orda* between Qarshi and Samarkand, consisting mainly of tents, including a tent mosque.<sup>30</sup> Ibn Battuta's description of an audience with him is as fine a description as we have of a Mongol khan of this era, surrounded by his *keshig*, or royal guard.

I found him in a tent, outside of which there were men ranged to right and left, the *amirs* among them [seated] on chairs, with their attendants standing behind and before them. The rest of the troops [too] had sat down in parade order, each man with his weapons in front of him. . . . When I entered the king's presence, inside the tent, I found him seated on a chair, resembling a mosque-pulpit and covered with silk embroidered in gold. The interior of the tent was lined with silken cloth of gold, and a crown set with jewels and precious stones was suspended over the sultan's head at the height of a cubit. The principal *amirs* were [ranged] on chairs to right and left of him, and in front of him were the sons of the kings holding fly-whisks in their hands. At the doorway of the tent were the [sultan's] deputy, the vizier, the chamberlain, and the keeper of the sign-manual.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the rich symbolism of pastoralist tradition, shifting the center of power into Transoxiana and converting to Islam undermined the *smychka* by removing Tarmashirin geographically and culturally from his military base in the steppes. Tarmashirin introduced sharia law which, with its more individualistic approach to law, conflicted at many points with kin-based steppeland traditions. He also failed to summon annual *quriltais*. In 1334, two years after Ibn Battuta met him, Tarmashirin was deposed and executed after a revolt in Zungharia by regional leaders who complained he had broken with the traditions of the Mongol *Yasa* by not visiting the steppe regions in four years.<sup>32</sup>

The Chagatay *ulus* now split into eastern and western sections, divided by the Pamirs, and within each region power fragmented even further. "The qan of the ulus became less and less important. Tribal chieftains dominated, with the

ruling class now more comfortable in cities than in the steppe.”<sup>33</sup> The eastern lands of Zungharia, Uighuristan, and the Tarim basin formed a separate *ulus* of Moghulistan. The split between the Chagatay lands and Moghulistan, which had a natural geographical foundation in the geography of the Pamirs and the Tianshan mountain ranges, would prove more or less permanent, and from now on we will refer to these regions as Transoxiana or Central Asia (west of the Pamirs) and Moghulistan or Xinjiang (east of the Pamirs). After a period of confusion, Tughlugh-Temur (r. 1347–1363), a grandson of Du’a, established his authority over Moghulistan, ruling it until his death in the early 1360s. In 1353, Tughlugh-Temur converted to Islam, but not until the sixteenth century would Islam become the dominant religion of Moghulistan.<sup>34</sup>

The western parts of the Chagatay *ulus* would not be reunited until the reign of Timur, which began in 1370, almost 35 years after Tarmashirin’s death. Yet the region’s elites retained a sense of belonging to the Chagatay *ulus*, an identity that Timur would build on.<sup>35</sup>

## *THE WEST AND THE GOLDEN HORDE*

In accordance with Mongol tradition, the lands furthest from the Mongolian homeland fell within the *ulus* of Chinggis Khan’s eldest son, Jochi (d. 1225?), and Jochi’s second son, Batu (effective ruler from 1241 until his death in 1255). Their *ulus* included all regions west of the Urals and the Volga. It also included the cities of Khorezm in Transoxiana, and much of the Kazakh steppes, though strictly, these belonged to Batu’s elder brother, Orda. Orda’s realms are sometimes known as the “Blue” (or eastern) wing, and the lands west of the Volga as the “White” (or western) wing.<sup>36</sup> But Orda and his successors seem to have accepted the seniority of Batu and his lineage.

### BATU’S *ULUS*

Like Chagatay’s, the *ulus* of Jochi included three broad ecological bands. A forested northern region extended from Siberia to the Baltic; a region of steppe-lands reached from Zungharia to Hungary; and a thin and divided southern strip of agrarian and desert lands with a sprinkling of oasis or coastal cities reached from Khorezm to the shores of the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea.

West of the Volga, the three main ecological belts were clearly defined. The urbanized southern strip was thinner and more vulnerable to predation than in Central Asia. The forest lands to the north, unlike the underpopulated lands of Siberia, contained large agricultural populations and the many towns and cities that had once constituted Kievan Rus’. In Jochi’s *ulus*, then, steppe armies had the unique opportunity of building a *smychka* that could mobilize from farmlands and cities and trade routes both to the north and south of the steppes. However, the first administrators of the new polity, having learned their craft in Mongolia and Central Asia, looked first to the rich cities and trade routes of the south. It took them time to work out how best to mobilize from Kievan



**Map 2.3** The Golden Horde during the reign of Khan Ozbeg (1313–1341). Adapted from Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 204.

Rus’ to the north. In the long run, though, the existence of sedentary lands both to the north and south of the Pontic steppes helps explain the durability and resilience of the mobilizational machine built by Batu and his successors.

Arabic and Persian sources described the region as “the Tatar lands,” or the “northern lands,” or “Desht-i-Kipchak” (the land of the Kipchak), or the “Ulus of Jochi,” or the “Ulus of Batu.” Contemporary Russian sources normally referred to “the Tatars,” or (from the 1280s) the “*orda*” (or royal camp) of the ruler.<sup>37</sup> Though created and ruled by Mongols, the region’s elites were soon Turkicized as they absorbed Turkic tribes and military units from the Pontic steppes.<sup>38</sup> Turkic replaced Mongolian on coinage during the reign of Töde-Menghu (1280–1287), and after conversion to Islam, in the reign of Ozbeg, Arabic became the language of religion.<sup>39</sup> We will refer to the polity Batu founded as the Golden Horde, though this is, strictly speaking, anachronistic, as that name first appeared in Russian sources long after its demise. The name may have originated from the golden ceremonial tent (or *orda*) of Khan Ozbeg (1313–1341).<sup>40</sup> (Map 2.3.)

## BASIC STRUCTURES OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

The Golden Horde was created during the western campaigns of 1237–1241, which were commanded by Jochi’s son, Batu. Though Batu’s lineage died out



in 1360, the polity he founded would survive, with some interruptions, for 180 years, until the death of Edigu in 1420.

After Ogodei's death in 1241, most Mongol armies campaigning in the west returned to Mongolia. However, Batu and his closest followers settled in the rich pasturelands of the southern Volga, not far from the old Khazar capital of Itil. They began to nomadize between summer pastures near the northern trading towns of Volga Bulgharia (whose old capital, Bulghar, acted briefly as a provisional capital under emirs from the former Bulghar ruling elite), and a winter camp at Saray, the new Jochid capital, in the Volga delta (modern Selitrennoe, north of Astrakhan).<sup>41</sup> By the early 1260s, Saray was already the center of a powerful mobilization system. In 1263/4, Mamluk ambassadors arriving from Egypt to visit the *orda* of Batu's brother and successor, Khan Berke (r. 1258–1267), "traveled for twenty days through a steppe dotted with tents and [flocks of] sheep, until they reached the river Itil [Volga] ... [O]n its banks is the camp of the Khan Berke. By means of [the Volga], food and sheep are brought to them."<sup>42</sup>

After conquering the Pontic steppes, Batu's armies removed the former Polovtsian elites and either enslaved their followers (generating a glut in the slave markets of the Black Sea cities), or incorporated them within their own armies.<sup>43</sup> Then, like his grandfather, Chinggis Khan, Batu allocated grazing lands to his brothers and followers at a *quriltai*. When Carpini traveled through the region in 1246, just 10 years after the conquest of Rus', and five years after Ogodei's death, regional leaders already had their own territories and migration routes. Most routes, like Batu's, ran north and south along major rivers, the Yaik (Ural), the Volga, the Don, and the Dnieper. Dominating the new system were 10 to 14 Chinggisid princes or commanders (*temniki*), each controlling pasturelands along a major river system. Each regional army consisted, in principle, of a *tumen*, or about 10,000 soldiers.<sup>44</sup> In 1253, William of Rubruck found that:

every commander, according to whether he has a greater or smaller number of men under him, is familiar with the limits of his pasturelands and where he ought to graze in summer and winter, in spring and autumn. For in the winter they move down southwards to the warmer regions, and in the summer they move up northwards to the colder ones. They pasture in the waterless grazing grounds in the winter, when the snow is there, since snow serves them for water.<sup>45</sup>

Over time, local *uluses* evolved into hereditary chiefdoms. The four main *uluses*, whose leaders would form the powerful council of four *qarachi beys*, were based on Khorezm, Saray, the steppes north of the Caucasus, and Crimea. Within these main *uluses* there were approximately 70 smaller *uluses* corresponding to the 60 to 70 "emirs" mentioned in Arabic sources.<sup>46</sup> The pasturelands of these core regions provided the military foundation for the Golden Horde, while the hierarchical structure of *uluses* gave it political and organizational shape.

Batu's choice of the Volga delta as his personal base made sense. The region was surrounded by rich and extensive pasturelands, and had provided a center

for pastoralist confederations since at least the time of the Sarmatians, early in the first millennium BCE. It was also an important commercial choke point, from which it was possible to tax the commercial caravans that traveled east and west between Central Asia and the Black Sea, or north and south between Persia, Central Asia, and the forest lands of Volga Bulgaria, Rus', and the Baltic. The basic structures of the Golden Horde reproduced those of the Mongol Empire. "From Sarai, the Golden Horde rulers reduplicated almost exactly the system of dispersed economic dependencies centered upon Karakorum: Sarai was 700 miles from Moscow, 600 miles from Kiev, and in the opposite direction, 800 miles from its dependency of Khorezm."<sup>47</sup> The geography of the new *smychka* was very clear. Its military power lay in the steppes, while its wealth lay to the south, west, and north of the steppes, and in the caravans and ships that moved goods within and through Batu's *ulus*.

The Golden Horde had access to three distinct types of mobilizational regions. The first included the thin strip of cities along its southern borders from Khorezm to the Black Sea, and the rich trades that passed between them. The second consisted of the northern Slavic lands once unified within Rus'. Here, forests, scattered rural populations, and cities, generally poorer than those of the south, posed distinctive mobilizational challenges. Resources were abundant but widely dispersed, and pastoralist armies could not keep their armies long in the woodlands with their limited pastures. Finally, there were potential looting zones in eastern Europe, Azerbaijan, and northern Iran, and even, occasionally, in Central Asia.

Batu's tax collectors focused first on the trading caravans and cities of the south, where they found a mobilizational environment similar to Transoxiana. In the early years of the Golden Horde, trade caravans and river trades may have been its most important source of wealth.<sup>48</sup> Batu and his successors understood and respected the commercial, financial, and administrative expertise to be found in regions such as Khorezm, whose officials replicated the role once played by Uighur officials under Chinggis Khan. Urgench (modern Kunya-Urgench), the capital of Khorezm, enjoyed a revival of wealth and fortunes in the fourteenth century before being destroyed by Timur in 1388. Ibn Battuta visited the city in February 1333. He described it as

the largest, greatest, most beautiful and most important city of the Turks. It has fine bazaars and broad streets, a great number of buildings and abundance of commodities; it shakes under the weight of its population, by reason of their multitude...<sup>49</sup>

The Golden Horde also controlled trading cities along the Syr Darya, such as Otrar, Sygnak, and Dzhenid, as well as cities on the northern shores of the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. This gave them control over the resources flowing through the northern, steppe branch of the Silk Roads, which led to the trading cities of the Black Sea, Byzantium, and the eastern Mediterranean. At its height, the Golden Horde was able to protect caravans traveling from Khorezm to the Black Sea. Ibn Arabshah, an Arab historian who wrote in the early fifteenth century, noted that, "There was a time, when caravans

departing from Khwarazm by carts moved safely and without danger to their destination – the Crimea. It took three months to cross that distance.”<sup>50</sup> Plenty of people lived in the arid steppes between so that caravans did not need to hire guides or bring food or fodder. By the early fifteenth century, though, he noted that few lived in the steppes and caravans no longer traveled through them. Black Sea cities had traded between the steppes and the Mediterranean for at least two millennia, handling products of the forests (honey, wax, and furs) and of the steppelands (grain, horses, fish, and slaves), as well as more exotic trade goods from the far north and the far east. All these products enjoyed sustained demand from Mediterranean consumers. The slave trade was particularly profitable. Slaves, some sold by their own families, might be used as servants in the Crimean cities, or sold by European merchants as domestic servants or concubines in Europe or, particularly if they came from Central Asia, as soldiers in Mamluk Egypt.<sup>51</sup>

So vital was the commercial and financial prosperity and expertise of the southern cities that in 1267 Khan Mengü-Temur sold control over Caffa (a town of little significance before this date) to the Genoese, and granted Venice concessions in Azov (Tana). Both cities flourished, and Caffa became a major center for the slave trade. In 1332 Ibn Battuta found 200 trading and military ships in Caffa’s harbor. He reported that Caffa had a Genoese governor and most of its inhabitants were “infidels.”<sup>52</sup> The Golden Horde took a good share of the profits from these markets, supervising them through a governor based in Solgat (Staryi Krim). Eventually, the rulers of the Golden Horde negotiated treaties that allowed Italian officials to collect fees of 3–5 percent on the value of all traded merchandise for their Jochid overlords, in return for considerable independence and Jochid protection for their trade and subjects.<sup>53</sup>

The most important of the Golden Horde’s looting zones were in northern Persia and eastern Europe. As in the Chagatay *ulus*, looting zones provided military training and booty for pastoralists, and helped cement the loyalty of regional leaders, whose wealth and authority they bolstered. Looting raids also provided information on the strength of neighbors and rivals, and on possibilities for further expansion.

The third and most distinctive mobilizational region lay in Rus’ and Volga Bulgharia, in the forested north. The human and material wealth of the north was scattered in villages and towns that were generally smaller and poorer than those of Transoxiana or the Black Sea shores. Forests reduced the mobility of pastoralist armies, and provided little fodder for their horses, so at first the Mongols probably thought of the region as a western equivalent of Siberia. On the other hand, river systems linked the major cities of the region into commercial networks that reached from the Baltic to the Volga and Caspian, and down the Dnieper to the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. These routes had great potential importance as they connected Saray to the flourishing markets of northwestern Europe.

For Arabic geographers, as for the Mongols, the ecological similarities of northern forest peoples blurred the cultural differences between them. Allsen writes:

At the western end of the steppe–forest frontier, both the Eastern Slavs and the Volga Bulgars had mixed economies that combined, in varying proportions, agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, and urban handicrafts production. And such a characterization, at least at this level of generalization, can just as accurately be applied to Qirghiz of the Yenisei or the Jurchens of the Amur basin. It is not surprising then, that in the Islamic geographical tradition northerners are much homogenized. The term Saqālibah embraced disparate ruddy complexioned peoples – Scandinavians, Slavs, Finns and Turks – of the northern forests. The Persian author Gardīzī, in the mid-eleventh century, even relates and conflates the Saqālibah with the Khirkhiz (Qirghiz) of the Yenisei.<sup>54</sup>

The Mongol conquest of Rus' destroyed many of its cities. There were 14 Jochid campaigns in northeastern Rus' alone in the 25 years after the invasion of 1237, and many more followed. So divided were the principalities of Rus' that, before the 1320s, Mongol contingents were often joined by armies from the principalities.<sup>55</sup> Some regions, such as the old Rus' capital of Vladimir, never fully recovered. Economic activity and building declined, as did the quality of workmanship, as artisans were dispatched to build and beautify the steppe cities of the Mongols.<sup>56</sup> However, some Rus' towns, including Novgorod, Pskov, Tver, and Smolensk, escaped the attentions of Mongol armies, and may even have benefited from an influx of refugees and the decline of their rivals.

At first, the Mongols used the crudest of methods to mobilize resources from the north. Batu sent temporary agents or *basqaqs* (many of them probably from Urgench) to Volga Bulgharia and the principalities of Rus', where they demanded significant resources. In the 1250s, Mongke held an empire-wide census and attempted to regularize tax collection from all regions, but his death in 1259 ended all tax transfers to Karakorum.<sup>57</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century, in both Rus' and Volga Bulgharia, tax collection was mostly left to local princes who had been confirmed in office by the khans of the Golden Horde. The taxes they collected included tribute payments (the *vykhod*), which may have consisted mainly of furs at first, though eventually they would be paid in silver coins worth several thousand silver rubles a year.<sup>58</sup> There were no silver mines in Rus', so the princes of Rus' acquired their silver from trade with Europe, where rich silver mines had been discovered in Saxony and Bohemia in the tenth century. The villages and towns of Rus' also had to support the post-horse system, the *iam*, a burden so onerous that villages along post-horse routes were exempted from all other taxes. Customs duties were levied on all trade goods (*tamga*), and cities and villages had to support Mongol officials traveling in Rus'.<sup>59</sup> There were many other informal costs to be borne, such as the gifts that princes gave to khans and their officials on visits to Saray (gifts that could prove critical in deciding the outcome of contests between rival princes), as well as the extortionate demands of Mongol officials.

Low productivity limited agrarian surpluses, which increased the relative importance of commercial wealth both to the Golden Horde and to the princes who collected the tributes. Novgorod, with its well-established European networks, played a pivotal role in these trades. Novgorod's merchants sold furs, wax, timber, and potash to Flemish and German merchants in return for

silver, wine, beer, and textiles. Novgorod used European silver to buy grain from Riazan' and Moscow, but much of the silver was used to pay the *vykhod*, which was sent down the Volga river to Saray. European and Russian goods, particularly furs, could also be sold profitably in the markets of Saray and the Black Sea, while steppe goods such as horses and hides were traded northwards.<sup>60</sup>

In the Golden Horde, as in Transoxiana, mobilizing resources through local princes worked well as long as Saray kept tight control of the region. Before the death of Mongke in 1259, princes traveled to Karakorum to be confirmed in office. Under the Jochids, they traveled to Saray, where they often left sons behind as hostages. Visits to Saray could be lethal. Between 1308 and 1339 eight princes (including four grand princes) were executed at Saray.<sup>61</sup> But those princes who survived these trips got to know the system from the inside and sometimes established close ties of patronage and even friendship with the rulers and officials of the Golden Horde. Over almost two centuries, more than two hundred princes received the Mongol *iarlyk*, confirming them in office.

In return for loyalty and the delivery of tributes, the khans of the Golden Horde provided protection both for princes and for the Orthodox Church. In accordance with Mongol tradition, the church was exempted from taxation, and in 1261 Metropolitan Kirill and Grand Prince Alexander Nevskii of Vladimir persuaded Khan Berke to found a Christian bishopric in Saray. In return, the Mongol khans asked only for the church's blessing, so that now Orthodox leaders prayed for the khans of the Golden Horde as well as the princes of Rus'.<sup>62</sup> Relative independence, expanding trade, and a degree of protection eventually allowed some of the principalities of Rus' to prosper despite the tribute burden. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were signs of economic and demographic recovery.<sup>63</sup> Some old cities expanded and new cities appeared. Urbanization suggests population growth and an increasing tax base. Renewed building of stone churches is one indication of increasing wealth. The fact that even villages contributed to tribute payments, sometimes in silver, is another sign of economic recovery.<sup>64</sup>

At the heart of the Jochid mobilizational machine was the khan's camp or *orda*. When Ibn Battuta traveled through the Golden Horde in 1332–1333, he found the *orda* of Khan Ozbeg in the north Caucasus, near modern Piatigorsk:

we saw a vast city on the move with its inhabitants, with mosques and bazaars in it, the smoke of the kitchens rising in the air (for they cook while on the march), and horse-drawn waggons transporting the people. On reaching the camping place they took down the tents from the waggons and set them on the ground, for they are light to carry, and so likewise they did with the mosques and shops.<sup>65</sup>

From one point of view, Ozbeg's *orda* was the headquarters of an army. From another, it was a mobile capital city, the home of officials and religious leaders, as well as members of the royal family.

Over time, like the rulers of the Chagatay *ulus*, the elites of the Golden Horde were drawn towards the cities. Some of the newer cities were founded and built

by the Mongols. They were as artificial as Karakorum and, like Karakorum, they were originally built, provisioned, and beautified by slave labor, which was cheap after the vast deportations of the era of conquest. Giovanni Carpini mentions no towns in the region of Saray in 1246, but eight years later, in August 1254, Batu's son, Sartaq, told William of Rubruck about "Sarai, the new town Baatu has established on the Etilia [Volga]."66 When he visited Saray in 1333, Ibn Battuta found it to be "one of the finest of cities, of boundless size, situated in a plain, choked with the throng of its inhabitants, and possessing good bazaars and broad streets." It took Ibn Battuta half a day to walk from one end of the city to the other, through "a continuous line of houses, among which there were no ruins and no gardens."67 Modern excavations suggest that, with its suburbs, Saray covered 36 sq. kilometers and had a population of perhaps 75,000 people, making it much larger than Karakorum, and as large as Europe's major cities.68 It had 13 mosques and a diverse population of Mongols (few of whom were Muslims), Alans (mostly Muslims), Kipchak, Cherkess, Russians, and Byzantines (all of whom Ibn Battuta described as Christians). "Each group lives in a separate quarter with its own bazaars. Merchants and strangers from the two Iraqs, Egypt, Syria and elsewhere, live in a quarter which is surrounded by a wall for the protection of the properties of the merchants."69

## EVOLUTION OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

As in Central Asia, affluence and stability drew Mongol elites out of the steppes and towards the cities, where they found wealth, luxurious lifestyles, and connections. And, as in the Chagatay *ulus*, these changes undermined the traditional *smychka* by creating cultural, political, geographical, and economic divisions between rulers who lived in cities (or mobile cities like Ozbeg's *orda*) and their steppeland armies.

Batu ruled the western *ulus* from 1241 until his death in 1255. After the death of his son, Sartaq, and then of Sartaq's son, Batu was succeeded by his brother, Berke (r. 1258–1267). As ruler at the time of Mongke's death, Berke became the first independent ruler of the *ulus* that would become the Golden Horde. Raised in Khorezm, Berke was a devout Muslim. This helps explain two critical events in his reign that would shape Jochid foreign policy for many decades. In 1262, after conflicts about how to divide the spoils during the conquest of Persia, Berke attacked his cousin, the Il-Khan, Hulegu. Soon after, he concluded a defensive alliance with Sultan Baybars, the ruler of Mamluk Egypt, the power whose demand for soldier/slaves provided a market for those captured in the era of conquest, and energized the slave trade of the Black Sea cities. The lucrative trade with Egypt and the Mediterranean explains why the Golden Horde was so keen to keep the Dardanelles open either by allying with Byzantium or by threatening it through the Balkans.

After his death in 1267, Berke was succeeded by Batu's grandson, Mengu-Temur (r. 1267–1280). Under Mengu-Temur's successor, Tode-Menghu (r. 1280–1287), a non-Chinggisid commander, Emir Nogai (d. 1299), became the real power in the Golden Horde. Nogai had been one of Khan Berke's

most successful military commanders and controlled a large *ulus* in the west of the khanate, reaching from the Danube to the Pontic steppes, in the region that would eventually form the heartland of the Crimean khanate. In his final years, Nogai emerged as the *aqqa* or senior figure of the Jochid dynasty, though, as a non-Chinggisid, he could not rule himself.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, Russian chronicles describe him as a “Tsar,” and foreign diplomatic embassies often treated him as the real power in the khanate. He married into both the Il-Khanate and Byzantine royal families and, for a time, ruled the kingdom of Bulgharia.<sup>71</sup> Nogai organized the coup that placed Mengu-Temur’s son, Khan Toqta (r. 1291–1312), on the throne, but he was eventually killed in conflict with Toqta, who won these conflicts partly by maintaining the support of pastoralist leaders and their armies. Toqta followed up his victory by reallocating lands and migration routes to loyal followers, and confiscating the pasturelands of his enemies. The extent of Nogai’s power is shown by the fact that, after his death, the Golden Horde lost control of the lands he had conquered in the foothills of the Carpathians.<sup>72</sup>

Toqta was succeeded in 1313 not by his son but by his nephew, Ozbeg (r. 1313–1341), who gained the throne after a coup organized by his mother, Balajun. She was supported by Qutluq Temur, the emir of Saray, who controlled powerful armies from Khorezm. During Ozbeg’s long reign, there were important changes in the structure of the khanate. Ozbeg himself converted to Islam, under the influence of a Bukharan sheikh, Ibn ‘Abd-ul-Hamid, and during his reign Islam became the official religion of the khanate, though it still had little influence in the steppes.<sup>73</sup> Fedorov-Davydov argues that this change is linked to the rise of a new, more urbanized elite group, with close connections to the Muslim elites of Saray and Khorezm (where Ozbeg’s patron Qutluq Temur would become governor), and to the Muslim world of the Mediterranean.<sup>74</sup> If true, this suggests that the coup that brought Ozbeg to power was a rebuff to traditional steppe elites, and revealed the rising power of an emerging central bureaucracy, dominated by urbanized Muslims. One sign of this shift may be the decline of the traditional *quriltai*. None were held in the Golden Horde after 1300. Under Ozbeg we also begin to see more bureaucratized administrative structures, such as the institution of the *qarachi beys*, a council of four leading emirs whose leader, the *beglerbegi*, was a sort of prime minister. This institution may have been modeled on a similar institution in the Il-Khanate, or it may derive from the structures of the original *keshig*, or bodyguard, of Chinggis Khan. By the time of Ozbeg, the Khan’s orders were being counter-signed by one of the four *qarachi beys*.<sup>75</sup>

Another sign of the growing importance of cities and trade is increased town building, including the building of a new capital, New Saray, for Khan Janibeg (1342–1357). The collapse of the Persian Il-Khanate after 1335 diverted much Central Asian trade through the more stable lands of the Golden Horde.<sup>76</sup> However, little of this wealth reached the steppes, further weakening the ties between steppe armies and city rulers. When, in the middle of the fourteenth century, we find Jochid leaders hiring Italian mercenaries, we must suspect a serious breakdown in the yoking mechanism of the *smychka*.

## CONCLUSION

In the century after Mongke's death, we see a rapid but partial unraveling of the Mongol Empire. The central authority evaporated, and so did the power and wealth of the capital, Karakorum. But in the major *uluses* or family domains, relatively stable regional systems of rule emerged. In each, however, tensions arose between the different components of the *smychka*. In the Far East, that tension was expressed in Chinese rule over an impoverished Mongolian stepeland. In Central Asia, ties between pastoralist and urban regions loosened, and mobilizational systems splintered into local tribal groupings. In the Golden Horde, a regional *smychka* survived for well over a century, but by the middle of the fourteenth century, ties between the pastoralist and urbanized drivers of the *smychka* were loosening. In the 1360s, the Golden Horde would fall apart during a prolonged civil war.

## NOTES

- 1 Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, 143.
- 2 Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan."
- 3 Dardess, "From Mongol Empire," 122–123.
- 4 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 218.
- 5 Barthold, "History of the Semirechye," in *Four Studies*, 1: 123.
- 6 Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 60.
- 7 See Dardess, "From Mongol Empire," and Atwood, "Ariq Böke," in *Encyclopedia*, 21–22.
- 8 Dardess, "From Mongol Empire," 153.
- 9 Vladimirtsov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 127–128.
- 10 Gongor, "Khalkh Torchoon," 516.
- 11 Endicott, "The Mongols and China," 467.
- 12 Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," 6: 472.
- 13 Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 115; and see Vladimirtsov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 126–127, which stresses the survival of Mongolian class hierarchies even in Yuan China.
- 14 Endicott, "The Mongols and China," 466; Vladimirtsov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 142.
- 15 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 22; see also Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 6–10, for an overview of Central Asia's geography and climate.
- 16 Juvaini, *The History*, 272–273.
- 17 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 147.
- 18 Barthold, "History of the Semirechye," 122; Allsen adds that the Chu river valley, through which Rubruck had passed in 1253, "had had a well-developed urban and agricultural life, [but] was never rebuilt and remained for the next several centuries, a bastion of pastoralism": Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 89.
- 19 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 23; Buell, *Dictionary*, 81.
- 20 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 19–20.
- 21 Biran, *Qaidu*, 19–20; Qaidu was the son of Kashin, Ogodei's youngest son by his chief wife; he grew up in the *orda* of Ogodei and survived the civil war after the



- election of Mongke probably because he was too young to be actively involved; in 1252, Mongke gave him Qayaliq (Haiyali), to the north-west of Almaliq, near present-day Kopal.
- 22 Biran, *Qaidu*, 27–28.
  - 23 Biran, *Qaidu*, 92–95.
  - 24 Rashid al-Din Tabib, *Compendium of Chronicles*, 3: 522.
  - 25 Biran, *Qaidu*, 32.
  - 26 Dardess, “From Mongol Empire,” 133–134.
  - 27 Biran, *Qaidu*, 56–57.
  - 28 Biran, *Qaidu*, 44.
  - 29 Akhmedov, “Central Asia,” 265.
  - 30 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 3: 556–557.
  - 31 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 3: 557–558.
  - 32 Buell, *Dictionary*, 87–88; Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 3: 561–562; and see Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 119–120.
  - 33 Buell, *Dictionary*, 88.
  - 34 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 67–68 and 79.
  - 35 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 23.
  - 36 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 154–155 and 160 on the color symbolism; white was associated with the west and blue with the east, so the “orda” of Batu and his brother Orda were sometimes referred to as the “White” and “Blue” hordes.
  - 37 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 151–153.
  - 38 Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 39, for archaeological evidence that the Mongol elites were concentrated in the Volga delta region.
  - 39 Morgan, *The Mongols*, 125; on Mongol and Arabic, see Golden, *An Introduction*, 297.
  - 40 On the history of the term “Golden Horde” see Ostrowski, “Golden Horde”; the term first appeared in the late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century “History of Kazan,” which is largely mythical; see also Schamiloglu, “The Golden Horde,” 2: 819; Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 153–154; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 201.
  - 41 On Bulghar as a temporary capital, see Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 95, 101; on rule through Bulghar emirs, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 53; on Selitrennoe, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 203.
  - 42 Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, 181.
  - 43 On the glut of slaves, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 203.
  - 44 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 27; see Carpini, *The Story of the Mongols*, 99–100, for Carpini’s account; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 202; Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 164, lists 12 major *uluses* in the late thirteenth century, from that of Nogai, north of the Danube, to those along the right and left banks of the Dnieper, along the Don, along the right and left banks of the Volga, along the two banks of the Yaik, and finally, that of Shiban in northern Kazakhstan; in addition, there were two major urban *uluses*, in Crimea and Khorezm.
  - 45 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 72.
  - 46 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 166–167.
  - 47 Dardess, “From Mongol Empire,” 125.
  - 48 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 205: “Caravan trade was the foundation of the Golden Horde’s state finances.”
  - 49 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 3: 541; and see Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 125–126.
  - 50 Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 34.
  - 51 Di Cosmo, “Mongols and Merchants,” 398.

- 52 See Fisher, “Muscovy”; it would remain in Genoese hands until 1475, when it was seized by the Ottomans; see also Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 89; Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 2: 471.
- 53 Di Cosmo, “Mongols and Merchants,” 396 and passim.
- 54 Allsen, “Technologies of Governance,” 127.
- 55 Martin, “North-eastern Russia,” 1: 129–130.
- 56 Miller, “Monumental Building.”
- 57 Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 26–27; Allsen, “Technologies of Governance,” 133, and see Ch. 1.
- 58 Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 77; the only precise figures available date from 1389, when the tribute amounted to about 5,000 silver rubles.
- 59 See the summary in Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 77; and see the discussion in Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, Ch. 5.
- 60 On the route to Saray, Nasonov, *Mongoly i Rus'*, 110; Martin, “North-eastern Russia,” 1: 133.
- 61 Fennell, “Princely Executions.”
- 62 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 153; Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church*, 195–196; it is hard to resist analogies with the church’s role under the Soviet Union.
- 63 Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 83.
- 64 Kivelson, “Merciful Father, Impersonal State,” 193; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 83–84.
- 65 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 2: 482.
- 66 Rubruck, *The Mission*, 255; Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 10, notes the contrast between the accounts of Carpini and Rubruck; *ibid.*, 76, points out that Rubruck’s is the first reference to the existence of Saray.
- 67 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 2: 515.
- 68 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 115.
- 69 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels*, 2: 516.
- 70 Rashid al-Din, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, 125; here Toqta (son of Mengu-Temur) refers to Nogai as the *aqa* or senior of the Jochid lineage, and promises that “[A]s long as I live I shall be commanded by my aqa and shall not contravene thy will.”
- 71 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 180; Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 73, 76; Grekov and Yakubovskii, *Zolotaya orda i ee padenie*, 84.
- 72 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 48.
- 73 Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 103, on the limited influence of Islam in the steppe; on the conversion of Ozbeg, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 207; the most detailed account of the conversion to Islam is in DeWeese, *Islamization*.
- 74 Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 104.
- 75 Though barely visible in the available records, Schamiloglu argues that this was a crucial political body, for decrees were not enforceable without its consent, and it may even have played a crucial role in the election of khans, one similar to that of the *quriltai*s of the early thirteenth century. Schamiloglu, “The Golden Horde,” 820; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 146.
- 76 On the increase in town building in this era see Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 77–78.

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## [3] *1350–1500: CENTRAL AND EASTERN INNER EURASIA*

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### *THE CRISIS OF THE MID-FOURTEENTH CENTURY AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE GOLDEN HORDE*

If the thirteenth century was an era of expansion and increasing regional connections in much of Eurasia, the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were dominated by decline and devolution. Climate change and the movement of diseases across the continent would shape the histories of many parts of Inner and Outer Eurasia.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE BLACK DEATH

Beginning in the late twelfth century, climates in many parts of the world started to cool, beginning a slow descent into the Little Ice Age, whose coldest phase would be in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> In much of Inner Eurasia, though, climate change seems to have taken rather different forms, leading in some regions to warmer and wetter climates. Climate change was the first of two large trends that would shape many aspects of Eurasian history for several centuries. The second large trend was a series of plague epidemics that first struck in the middle of the fourteenth century. Climate change and plague may have been linked if, as John L. Brooke has suggested, increasing moisture in the steppelands multiplied the populations of fleas and rodents that carried the bubonic plague across Inner Eurasia from China to the Mediterranean world (Figure 3.1).<sup>2</sup>

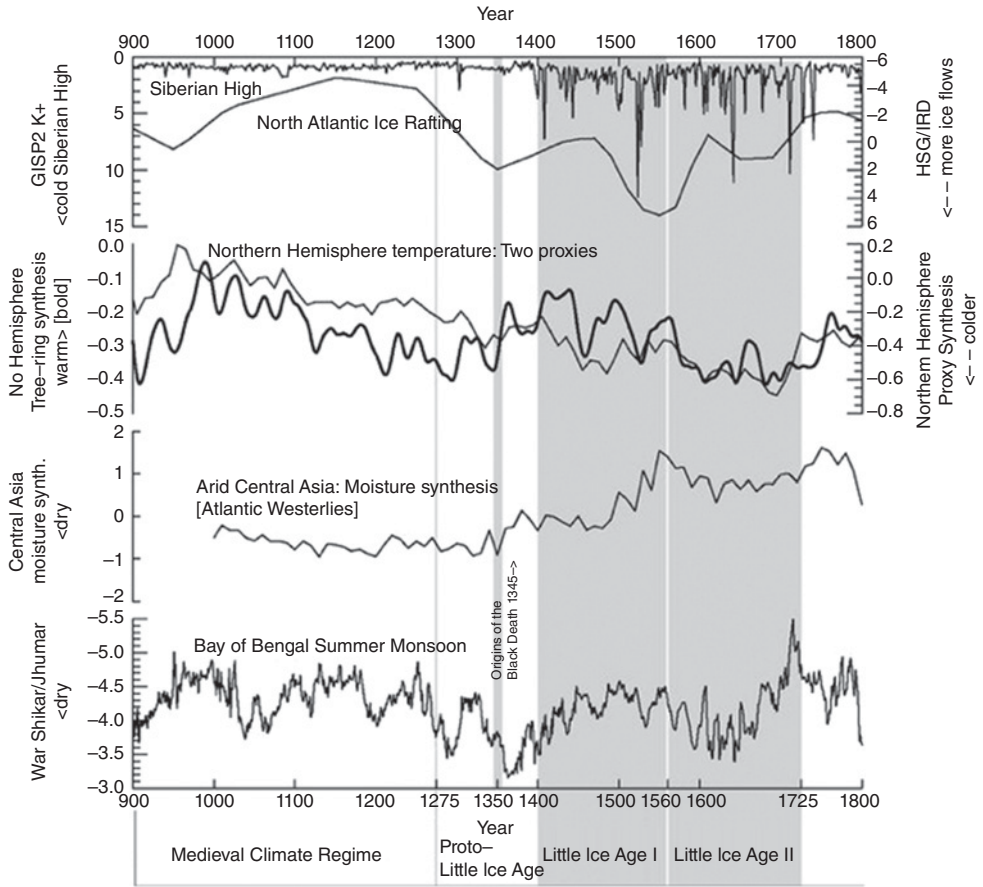
These large trends generated a demographic, economic, and political crisis that affected much of Eurasia in the mid-fourteenth century. As Figure 3.2 shows, available demographic evidence, though imprecise, suggests that this was the only century in the last millennium in which global populations actually declined, though there were several such periods in the previous millennium, some of them possibly linked also to the Black Death.<sup>3</sup>

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

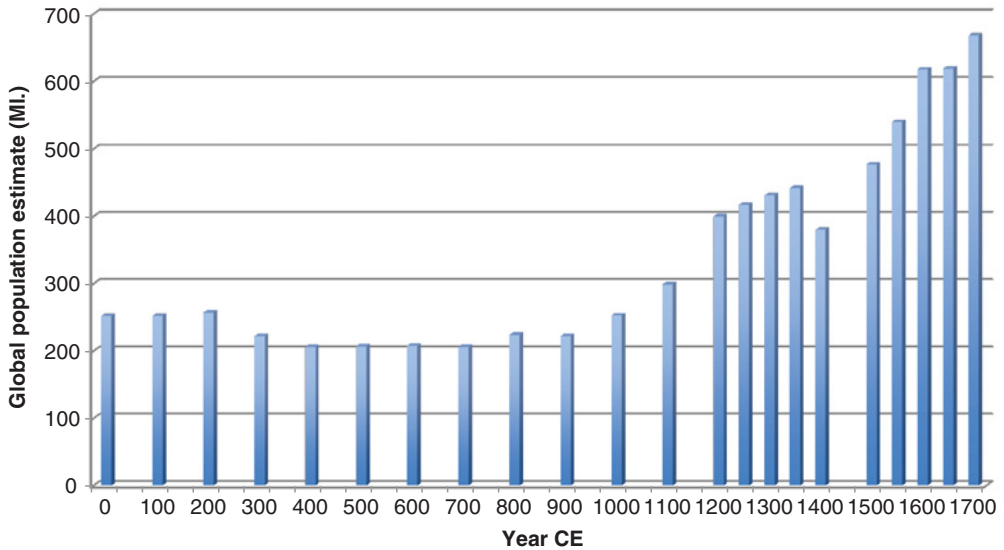
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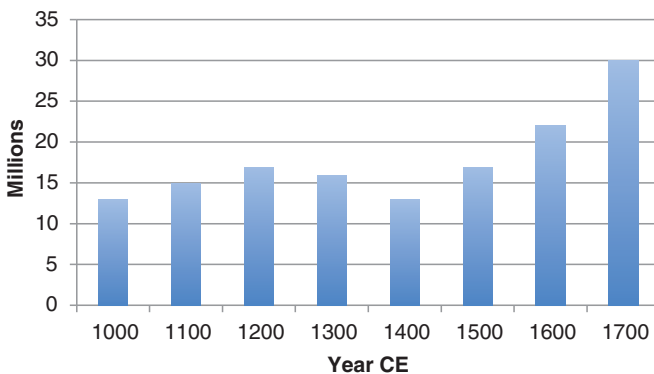
**Figure 3.1** Little Ice Age and the Black Death. Brooke, *Climate Change*, Figure III.10, 258. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

In Inner Eurasia, where surpluses were smaller and less certain than in Outer Eurasia, and climatic instability could quickly stir up widespread conflict, the impact of such crises was magnified, as the charts suggest. According to Biraben’s figures (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4), the population of Inner Eurasia may have declined in both the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, while in Eurasia as a whole, the decline is most evident in the fourteenth century. The Eurasia-wide extent and scale of the fourteenth-century crisis can be explained, in part, by the increasing connectedness of the thirteenth-century “world system.” As Abu-Lughod put it, “just *because* the regions had become so inter-linked, declines in one inevitably contributed to declines elsewhere, particularly in contiguous parts that formed ‘trading partnerships.’”<sup>4</sup> In *Plagues and Peoples*, William McNeill explained how the expansion of exchange networks after 1000 CE guaranteed that the plague would reach regions whose populations lacked immunity to it, so that the plague took the horrifying form of what Alfred Crosby has called “virgin soil epidemics.” These are epidemics “in which the



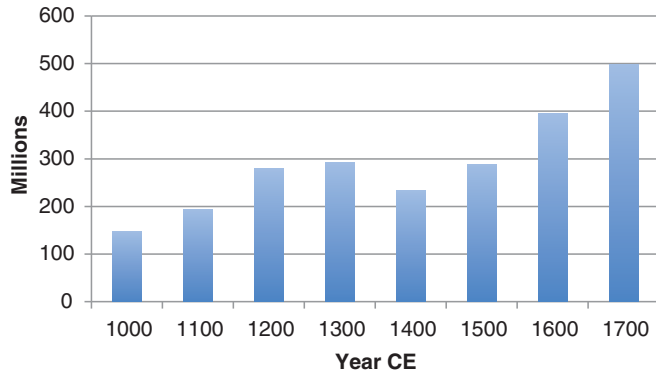
**Figure 3.2** Global population estimates to 1700 CE. Brooke, *Climate Change*, Table III.1a, 259. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

populations at risk have had no previous contact with the diseases that strike them and are therefore immunologically almost defenseless.”<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship has demonstrated the close link between large-scale plague epidemics and integrative pulses that link once separated regions, for this was not the first time that the bubonic plague (*Yersinia pestis*) had spread through Inner Eurasia.<sup>6</sup> It had also spread in the sixth century CE during the so-called Justinian Plague, after which it recurred for two more centuries. As in the fourteenth century, the Justinian Plague probably originated among rodent populations in northern Xinjiang before spreading along migration and trade routes of the Silk



**Figure 3.3** Biraben: populations of Inner Eurasia, 1000 to 1700 CE. Data from Biraben “Essai.”

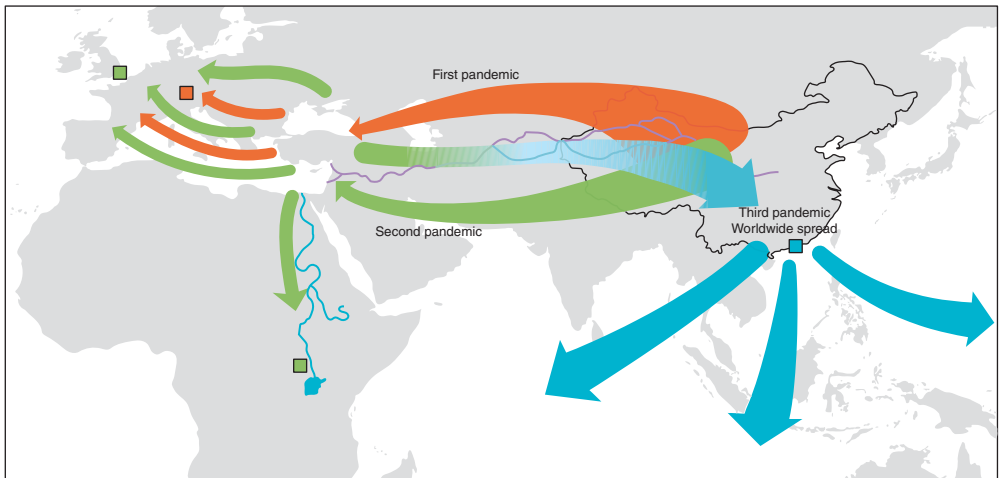




**Figure 3.4** Biraben: populations of Outer Eurasia, 1000 to 1700 CE. Data from Biraben “Essai.”

Roads, along the southern borderlands of Inner Eurasia, to the Mediterranean and Europe (Figure 3.5).

The “Black Death” struck first in the middle of the fourteenth century, and then recurred, with declining virulence, for several hundred years. The first wave may have killed 30–40 percent of the population in both urban and rural areas. The Black Death reached Khorezm in 1345, and Saray in 1346. When it reached Khan Ozbeg’s lands in October and November of 1346, a contemporary reported that “the villages and towns were emptied of their inhabitants,” while 85,000 deaths were reported in the Crimea.<sup>7</sup> The plague reached Caffa, and from there Italian merchants fleeing Janibeg’s besieging armies may have carried it to Italy. In 1348, the plague spread to the Levant and northern Africa. In 1349 it reached Spain, northwestern Europe, and Britain, as well as the



**Figure 3.5** Possible routes for the spread of bubonic plague during three pandemics, in the 6th–8th, 14th–17th, and 19th–20th centuries. Wagner et al., “*Yersinia pestis*.” Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

Baltic and Scandinavia. By this circular route it entered Rus' from the northwest, through the Baltic, reaching Pskov and Novgorod in 1352 and other parts of Rus' the next year. The fact that the Black Death did not reach Rus' directly from Saray suggests that by this time exchanges between Russia and Europe through Novgorod were more vigorous than those between Russia and Saray.

In 1353, the plague killed Prince Simeon of Moscow, one of his brothers, and both of his sons, as well as the Orthodox Metropolitan Theognostus. Prince Simeon's will captures the apocalyptic horror felt by contemporaries. "And lo, I write this to you so that the memory of our parents and of us may not die, and so that the candle may not go out."<sup>8</sup> In central Russia, the plague may have killed a quarter of the population. After its first assault, the plague struck Saray and the Russian lands again in 1364, 1374, and 1396, and for the last time in 1425.<sup>9</sup> But its impact diminished as populations acquired increasing immunity. Its periodic returns explain why populations did not reach their pre-plague levels again until 1500, 150 years after its first appearance in western Inner Eurasia.

## THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

The Black Death was particularly destabilizing in Inner Eurasia, with its smaller surpluses and cities, and more fragile polities. It certainly helped shatter the Golden Horde, the one Mongol successor state that survived into the mid-fourteenth century. But other factors were important, too. The Ottoman seizure of Gallipoli in 1354 throttled trade through the Bosphorus, while the collapse of the Yuan dynasty in 1368 reduced trade along the Silk Roads, and declining silver production in Central Europe created a bullion shortage.<sup>10</sup> Goods that had been carried through the southern borders of the Golden Horde after the collapse of the Il-Khanate in the 1330s began once more to flow south through Iran or northwards through Rus'.<sup>11</sup> In the last two decades of the fourteenth century, Timur's devastating campaigns (see below) ruined many of the cities and trade centers of the Golden Horde, including its new capital, New Saray. By the early fifteenth century, the ancient trade in silks and spices through the Pontic steppes had declined as increasing amounts of Chinese goods were carried through the Indian Ocean. The extensive trade networks once managed from Saray fell under the control of regional powers, from Novgorod to Lithuania to Crimea, Kazan', and Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

If these changes felled the Golden Horde, the Black Death finished it off. The bubonic plague flourished in armies on campaign, pruned ruling lineages, and ignited vicious succession struggles. In the late 1350s, Batu's lineage died out amidst brutal fratricidal conflicts. Khan Berdibeg (r. 1357–1359) succeeded to the khanate probably after murdering his father, Janibeg (r. 1342–1357), the builder of New Saray. Berdibeg was murdered by another brother, who was murdered in turn by another brother, Nawroz. Nawroz, the last of the Batuids, left no heir. Now each of the four leading noble families in the Golden Horde began to support rival claimants to the throne. In a fractal repeat of the breakup of the Mongol Empire, the Golden Horde split into regional *uluses*, each of which now had to build its own, regional *smychka*.<sup>13</sup>

After 1360, the Golden Horde fell apart during a twenty-year civil war that Russian sources call “The Great Troubles.” Khans succeeded each other with dizzying speed as regional leaders put up rival claimants. Rivals fought over four core territories: (1) Crimea and the Crimean steppe; (2) the steppes and cities of the north Caucasus; (3) the Volga delta region around Saray; and (4) the steppes of Kazakhstan and the cities of the Syr Darya and Khorezm. Each region had once been a princely *ulus* and each yoked together agrarian regions and commercial cities with pastoralist armies from the steppes. Eventually, (5) a fifth core region emerged near modern Kazan’, in what had once been Volga Bulgharia. In the fifteenth century, each of these regions would support mobilizational systems based on cut-down versions of the *smychka*.

The career of Emir Mamaq (d. 1381) illustrates the complexities of “The Great Troubles.”<sup>14</sup> Mamaq had been Khan Berdibeg’s leading emir (or *begler-begi*), and also, in a common Mongol configuration, his son-in-law and marriage ally. Like Nogai in the previous century, he held lands in Crimea, the Crimean steppe, and the western borderlands. Not being a Chinggisid, Mamaq could only rule through, or with the support of, Chinggisid puppets. In 1361, he helped install Khan Abdullah in Saray. He then returned to Crimea to raise troops, leaving a power vacuum in Saray, during which three different khans were enthroned. For the next 20 years, there would be two major regional centers, one at Saray and the other with Mamaq in the Crimean steppes. This was a familiar division of power in the region, which had been prefigured a century earlier in the time of Nogai, and would recur again many times as rival systems appeared in the Volga delta and Crimea. Numismatic evidence suggests that the division between these two regions lay along the Volga itself, as coins minted under Mamaq are more common in cities west of the river, except for the brief periods when Mamaq and his puppet khans controlled Saray.<sup>15</sup>

As Saray’s wealth and power ebbed, the borderlands fell away. Moldavia seceded in c.1359. In 1363, after the defeat of Jochid forces by the Lithuanian prince Ol’gerd at the battle of Blue Waters, the Podolian lands and most of the lands between the Dnieper and Dniester rivers stopped paying tribute. The rising Baltic power of Lithuania began to nibble away at the ancient heartlands of Kievan Rus’ along the Dnieper. Khorezm apparently became independent after 1361, for after that date its coins no longer carried the name of a Jochid khan. Astrakhan and Saraychik also rejected Saray’s authority. At times Saray’s rulers controlled little beyond Saray itself.<sup>16</sup>

With Batu’s line extinguished, two other Jochid lineages challenged for power in the center of Inner Eurasia: the lineage of Batu’s elder brother, Orda, and that of another brother, Shiban. In 1372, a descendant of Orda known as Urus Khan (d. 1377) moved west from his capital at Sygnak on the Syr Darya, conquered New Saray, and declared himself khan of the Golden Horde. (Urus’s real name was Muhammad, but he was nicknamed Urus because of his resemblance to the Slavic Rus’.)<sup>17</sup> Two of his former followers, another Jochid, Toqtamish, and a non-Chinggisid general known as Edigu, from the *ulus* of Shiban, sought the help of the rising Central Asian ruler Timur to overthrow Urus Khan. With Timur’s support, Toqtamish (fl. 1375–1405) conquered

Saray twice, in 1376 and again in 1380.<sup>18</sup> Both Toqtamish and Edigu would have long careers with many odd twists and turns.

To the west, Mamaq controlled the traditional flows of tribute from Rus'. So important was the Rus' tribute for Mamaq that when Grand Prince Dmitrii of Moscow (1359–1389) failed to deliver the full tribute because of chaos in the Horde and declining trade between Novgorod and the Baltic, Mamaq transferred the grand princely patent to the prince of Tver, only to return it after Muscovite armies defeated those of Tver. In 1380, Mamaq sent an army north to exact the full tribute from Moscow. At Kulikovo field, in September 1380, Prince Dmitrii of Moscow inflicted the first major defeat of Rus' forces over those of the Golden Horde. The battle looms large in Russian historiography, but it was never just a conflict between a colony and its steppe overlords. Mamaq represented just part of the khanate, and he was allied with Lithuania, though no Lithuanian armies turned up to support him. Mamaq's troops were a motley collection of pastoral nomads, Genoese mercenaries from Crimea, and contingents from other Rus' principalities.<sup>19</sup> In 1381, Mamaq was defeated by Toqtamish on the Kalka river near Azov. He fled to Caffa, whose Genoese rulers murdered him.

Toqtamish now reunited the two main regions of the Golden Horde and in 1382 reasserted its authority in a brutal raid on Moscow. According to the Nikon chronicle:

Until then the city of Moscow had been large and wonderful to look at, crowded as she was with people, filled with wealth and glory ... and now all at once all her beauty perished and her glory disappeared. Nothing could be seen but smoking ruins and bare earth and heaps of corpses.<sup>20</sup>

Awed by this reminder of the military power still wielded by the Jochid khans, several princes of Rus' headed for Saray and submitted to Toqtamish. Khorezmian coins in his name show that he even reasserted Saray's authority over Khorezm.<sup>21</sup>

The revived Golden Horde lasted for just a decade. In 1390 and again in 1395, Timur crushed Toqtamish's armies and sacked Saray. After his second defeat, Toqtamish fled to Lithuania and was succeeded as khan by his former ally, Edigu (fl. 1395–1420). Edigu came from the Manghit tribes of the *ulus* of Shiban and would later be regarded as the founder of the Nogai (or "Manghit") Horde. Like Mamaq, Edigu ruled the Golden Horde as *beglerbegi* through a series of Chinggisid puppets. The Golden Horde finally disintegrated after Edigu's death in 1420.

## CENTRAL ASIA AND TIMUR

As the Golden Horde crumbled, new mobilizational systems emerged. The remarkable career of Emir Timur (c.1336–1405) illustrates a mobilizational possibility that would never be explored so thoroughly again: that of building a powerful *smychka* in the complex ecological patchwork of Transoxiana.

Timur's career and those of his successors illustrate the difficulties of such a project, and help explain why, despite its wealth and sophistication, Central Asia provided an unstable foundation for a powerful mobilization system.

Timur was known as the "lame" (*Aqsaq Timur*) because an arrow wound to his right knee left him with a limp.<sup>22</sup> Not being a Chinggisid, he never assumed the title of khan but ruled, like Mamaq and Edigu, as the emir and marriage partner of Chinggisid puppets. When Ibn Khaldūn met him outside Damascus in 1401, Timur explained, "I myself am only the representative of the sovereign of the throne. (As for the king himself) here he is," and Timur pointed to a row of men standing behind him, one of whom was his Chinggisid stepson, but it turned out the boy had left the room.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1360s, Timur built up a powerful polity based on a *smychka* similar to that of Qaidu. It yoked the military power of Central Asian steppe armies (mostly from Transoxiana rather than Zungharia) to the commercial, financial, and technological resources of Transoxiana's cities. He extracted booty from a colossal looting zone reaching from Iraq and Anatolia to Russia and south to northern India. Timur also managed the unusual feat of yoking together the very different cultural and religious worlds of Central Asia's cities and steppes. He himself followed sharia law and supported Muslim institutions in the cities, but he accepted the more collectivist tribal rules of the steppes and many of his supporters followed traditional pastoralist religious traditions.<sup>24</sup> However, unlike Chinggis Khan, Timur failed to ensure a smooth succession after his death. The Timurid polity survived his death in 1405, but would never again be as powerful as during his lifetime.

Timur was born in c.1336 in a pastoralist milieu in Kish (modern Shahrīsab), south of Samarkand. He belonged to a Turkicized tribe of Mongol pastoralists, the Barulas, who had adopted Islam and developed close ties with the region's cities. Some of their chiefs owned agricultural and urban land, though most Barulas lived as pastoral nomads.<sup>25</sup> Like Chinggis Khan, Timur acquired his political and military skills in a world of vicious intertribal conflicts, complicated by the threat of invasion either from the khans of Moghulistan in the east, or from the Qara'unas in the south. The Qara'unas were descendants of Mongol armies settled in Afghanistan, who were ruled by Chagatay khans until the death of Tarmashirin in 1334.<sup>26</sup> For these rival groups, Central Asia's cities were prizes to be fought over, but also sources of power because they were the hubs of networks of political influence, and could supply cash, luxury goods, and markets for booty, while their populations provided recruits and their workshops produced high-quality weaponry. The cities were also fortresses.<sup>27</sup> In the late fifteenth-century memoirs of Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty, we have a vivid description of warfare in this region, with its pitched battles and sieges, its betrayals and rapid reversals of fortune.<sup>28</sup>

Timur's rise to power, like Temujin's, shows the importance of building elite structures disciplined by mutual advantage rather than just by the looser ties of kinship. As Manz points out, the struggles of Timur's youth were not strictly *between* tribes but rather for control *over* tribes, their armies, and the cities they controlled.<sup>29</sup> More reliable than the tribe was the *uymaq*, the personal

household, retinue, or guard of a chief, the Central Asian equivalent of the Mongol *keshig*.

An *uymaq* was an elite military formation organized as a great household under the leadership of its chief. The chief was supported by his family and by other lesser chiefs and their followers whose support was won by delicate negotiations and/or by success in war. The *uymaq* chief used his military support to collect taxes from townsmen and peasants, and to establish, in effect, a local territorial government commonly based in a citadel or fortress.<sup>30</sup>

The *uymaq* that gathered around Timur would eventually form the core of a new and highly disciplined ruling elite. Like many young pastoralist leaders, Timur learned his craft leading livestock raids, and members of these raiding parties would dominate the retinue of 300 or so soldiers that formed his *uymaq*. Timur's retinue was as diverse as Chinggis Khan's. Manz has identified 18 close followers, some related by marriage, some from smaller tribal groups, some with no tribal connections, and some, perhaps, of slave origin.<sup>31</sup>

His loyal followers made Timur a force to be reckoned with. Like Chinggis Khan, he extended his power by judiciously supporting and then betraying the region's most powerful rulers. In 1360, he supported an invasion of Transoxiana by the Moghul ruler, Khan Tughlugh-Temur (r. 1347–1363). In return, Tughlugh-Temur made Timur chief of the Barulas tribe and the Kish region. Within a year, Timur had switched his allegiance to Husain, the leader of the Qara'unas, and then back again to Tughlugh-Temur. After switching sides once more, in 1364, Timur and Husain drove Tughlugh-Temur out of Transoxiana, and Husain was elected emir at a special *quriltai*. Six years later, Timur overthrew Husain and arranged his execution.

Timur was elected emir of Transoxiana at a *quriltai* in 1370. He distributed Husain's many wives, taking some himself (including a Chinggisid, Saray Malik Khanim, who became his favorite wife), and giving others to his close followers, to form new ties of kinship within the emerging ruling elite.<sup>32</sup> In the next 15 years he placed his own followers at the head of most of the major tribal units and armies of the Chagatay *ulus*, including the Qara'unas. Like Chinggis Khan, a combination of toughness, skill, and luck had helped him build a new ruling class whose members owed him everything.

As the ruler of Transoxiana, Timur controlled a large, powerful, and disciplined army. At its core were contingents of pastoral nomads, whose families accompanied them on the longer campaigns.<sup>33</sup> Its strike force consisted of heavy cavalry, commanded by close followers of Timur, who were supported by large land grants. The cities provided infantry levies. On some campaigns Timur's army included elephants and, probably for the first time in the region, artillery and handguns. Timur's hybrid army of pastoralists, infantry, and artillery was much more expensive than traditional steppe armies so, while it could mobilize resources, it also depended on a vast flow of resources to keep it in the field. This may help explain why Timur, unlike Chinggis Khan, failed to build a durable system of tribute-taking outside his homeland. Instead, he treated conquered regions beyond his Chagatay *ulus* as looting zones. Looting zones became and remained the main source of Timur's wealth.

From 1380, Timur campaigned almost continuously, generating huge flows of booty that fueled and sustained his empire. Between 1381 and 1386 his armies fought in Khorasan and northern Afghanistan. In 1386 he invaded Persia. In the same year he began a long northern campaign against his former ally, Toqtamish, ruler of the Golden Horde. In 1390, Timur's armies pursued Toqtamish to the Volga, where they defeated him near modern Samara, then captured and looted his capital, Saray. In 1392, Timur set off on a five-year campaign in Persia and northern Mesopotamia. In 1394, his armies attacked Toqtamish once more, then raided north almost as far as Moscow, before looting Saray again on their return in 1395. New Saray would never recover and trade routes shifted south to the benefit of Timur's own capital, Samarkand.<sup>34</sup> In 1398 Timur invaded northern India and sacked Delhi, in a campaign that would provide the symbolic justification for his descendant Babur's conquest of India a century later. In 1399, Timur campaigned in Syria and Anatolia. In 1404, he launched an ambitious invasion of China. His armies set off early the next year but got no further than Otrar, where Timur died. His death ended all plans for invasion, a powerful reminder of the crucial role of individual leaders in pastoralist politics.

Cities and the people and wealth they contained were the main prize of most of these campaigns. Once a city had surrendered, Timur's armies would seal up all but one entrance to prevent unauthorized looting and stop inhabitants from fleeing with their property. Tax collectors and torturers moved through the conquered city, assessing its wealth, finding what was hidden, and extorting tributes. What they took was carefully registered before being divided between the commanders of Timur's army, and only when the leaders had their share were ordinary soldiers allowed to plunder. Where cities resisted or tried to outwit him, Timur put their inhabitants to the sword, erecting pyramids of their skulls as a warning to others. After the destruction of Isfahan in 1388, the historian Hafiz-i Abru claimed to have counted 28 pyramids, each with about 1,500 skulls.<sup>35</sup>

Ibn Khaldûn witnessed the fall of Damascus in February 1401. After the town fell,

[Timur] confiscated under torture hundredweights of money which he seized. ... Then he gave permission for the plunder of the houses of the people of the city, and they were despoiled of all their furniture and goods. The furnishings and utensils of no value which remained were set on fire ... [Then the army was allowed to plunder the city for three days.] When the soldiers had seized all the furniture and utensils left in the city, they drove out of it in fetters men, women, and children, except those under five years old and the feeble aged.<sup>36</sup>

Timur lavished great care on his own lands. In the Chagatay *ulus*, he supported agriculture and commerce and rebuilt major cities, adding mosques, palaces, and fortifications.<sup>37</sup> With his son Shahrukh, he renovated irrigation systems in what may have been the last large-scale irrigation works undertaken before the Russian conquest in the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Though personally illiterate, Timur valued cultural booty. He spent huge amounts adorning and enriching

his capital, Samarkand. He had a lifelong passion for architecture, which he indulged in the great cities of Central Asia, particularly Samarkand. He collected beautiful objects, such as porcelains. He was interested in philosophy and poetry and played a good game of chess, and his interest in scholarship and scientific matters seeded a cultural renaissance in Central Asia in the early fifteenth century.

A Spanish ambassador, Clavijo, visited Samarkand in 1404. In Timur's time, the city had huge suburbs in which there lived craftsmen transported from conquered regions.

From Damascus he brought weavers of silk, and men who made bows, glass and earthenware, so that, of those articles, Samarkand produces the best in the world. From Turkey, he brought archers, masons and silversmiths. He also brought men skilled in making engines of war. ... There was so great a number of people brought to this city, from all parts, both men and women, that they are said to have amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand persons, of many nations.<sup>39</sup>

According to Clavijo, there were so many captives that many lived outside the city "under trees and in caves." He reported that Samarkand's markets were abundant and contained many foreign goods.

Russia and Tartary send linen and skins; China sends silks, which are the best in the world (more especially the satins), and musk which is found in no other part of the world, rubies and diamonds, pearls and rhubarb, and many other things. ... From India come spices, such as nutmegs, cloves, mace, cinnamon, ginger, and many others which do not reach Alexandria.<sup>40</sup>

Though sedentary and nomadic regions were integrated into Timur's empire, the symbolic divisions of the *smychka* were never blurred. Pastoralists, most of whom were Turkic, specialized in warfare, while officials from the sedentary population (mostly Persian) dominated civilian government and managed the mobilization of resources, often under the supervision of Turkic emirs. The two spheres of warfare and government remained distinct ethnically, culturally, functionally, and administratively.<sup>41</sup>

After Timur's death in 1405, there followed a 15-year civil war that ended with the victory of his fourth son, Shahrukh (r. 1405–1447). Timur's successors all succumbed to the lure of Central Asia's magnificent cities. Like all Timur's sons, Shahrukh had grown up in a more urbanized environment than his father. He shifted his capital south to Herat in Khorasan, and devoted far more attention than his father to cultural and religious concerns. He spent lavishly on the beautification of major towns, and encouraged painting and literature. Shahrukh's son, Baysonghur, who ruled in Astarabad, was a passionate bibliophile, while his other son, Ulugh-Beg, who ruled in Samarkand (r. 1411–1449), earned fame as an astronomer and scholar. He encouraged the study of science and mathematics, and his observatory in Samarkand made some of the most precise astronomical measurements of the age and produced a new star catalogue. Ghiyath al-Din Khwandamir, a fifteenth-century historian, wrote:



Mirza Ulughbeg ... was unique among His Imperial Majesty Shahrukh's sons for his great learning and patronage and among all his peers for his justice and equity. He united the wisdom of Galen with the magnificence of Kay-Kaus, and in all the arts, especially in mathematics and astronomy, there was no one like him.<sup>42</sup>

Even more striking was the cultural flowering of the court of Sultan Husayn Bayqara (r. 1469–1506), another grandson of Timur, who ruled in Herat. During his rule, Herat enjoyed a renaissance of Persian and Chagatay Turkic literature and art; it was also home to the great poet, Mir Ali Shir Nava'i, who wrote in both Persian and Turkic.

Like the later khans of the Golden Horde and Central Asia, Timur's successors became so urbanized that they lost their grip on the military power of the steppes. Indeed, their failure to maintain control of the steppes, and the large flows of booty that steppe armies could mobilize, highlights the remarkable political and military achievement of Timur. On the other hand, it may be that the sort of campaigns Timur had led were simply unsustainable. Under his successors, conquest gave way to diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchanges. Efficient management of the region's irrigation systems sustained agriculture. The patronage of wealthy and well-educated rulers supported architecture, scholarship, and the arts, and the region's twin capitals, Samarkand and Herat, were regarded as among the Islamic world's most beautiful cities.<sup>43</sup>

But while the cities flourished, the armies languished, and the flows of booty they had generated dried up, weakening the bonds of patronage and personal loyalty that held rulers and the army within a single political force field. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Timurid rulers survived in Samarkand (until 1501) and Herat (until 1507) more through luck than skill. But their military and political power dwindled, and they became increasingly vulnerable to challenges from the steppes. Many of the city-states of Central Asia came under the sway of charismatic religious leaders, as rulers tried to achieve through religious cohesion what Timur had achieved through alliance building, warfare, and the redistribution of booty.

Sufis spread Islam among Turkic and Mongol tribes throughout the steppe regions of Central Asia, the Tarim basin, and modern Kazakhstan and Xinjiang. Some acquired great political influence through the organization of *tariqas*, or sufi schools or brotherhoods. The most powerful of the proselytizers came from the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa*, whose authority would eventually rival that of the region's emirs. The Naqshbandiyya order received its name from Baha al-Din Naqshband (1318–1389), a Sufi master and near contemporary of Timur from north-east of Bukhara, who encouraged his followers to participate in political and commercial life. Many sufi acquired great wealth, particularly in the form of charitable endowments or *waqf*, while some became marriage allies of regional leaders. As Millward writes:

Their claims of descent from the prophet Muhammad, chains of initiation, networks of lodges, close ties to merchants and rulers, tombs which served as pilgrimage sites and their often considerable wealth made the larger Sufi orders (*tariqa*) especially the Yasawiyya and Naqshbandiyya powerful institutions with growing religious and political influence in the Mongol imperial period and after.<sup>44</sup>

Particularly influential in the fifteenth century was the Naqshbandiyya Khwaja Ahrar (1404–1490). Originally a farmer and merchant, Khwaja Ahrar became an influential teacher, and an adviser to the Timurid rulers of Samarkand. He dominated the city's political life for over 30 years after 1457, ruling at first with the military support of the Uzbek khan Abul-Khayr, but then in the name of the relatively weak Timurid rulers, Abu-Sa'id (1451–1469) and his son Ahmad (1469–1494).<sup>45</sup> As Shaikh ul-Islam, Ahrar became the region's most important theologian, and through Sufi networks his influence extended deep into Moghulistan.

Part of the appeal of such figures was that many of their practices made sense in a steppe world of shamanic religions. Characteristic is a story told of Khoja Ishaq Wali (d. 1599), who spread Islam in the Tarim basin, Zungharia, and Semirechie. On hearing that a Kyrgyz chief was seriously ill, and his followers were making offerings to "idols," he dispatched one of his own followers, whose prayers caused the chief to sneeze, stand up, and profess his commitment to Allah and his one servant and prophet, Muhammad. The chief's Kyrgyz followers immediately converted, and the silver from one of the idols was donated to the Sufis.<sup>46</sup> Sufi power arose, in part, from their ability to work within the very different worlds of urban and steppe Islam.

But despite their broad cultural appeal, the religious traditions of the Sufis lacked the capacity of the traditional *smychka* to mobilize military power, and never again would Central Asian rulers form a mobilizational system as powerful as that of Timur.

## MOBILIZATION IN THE KAZAKH AND MONGOLIAN STEPPES

When the yoke that held the *smychka* together snapped, its two beasts lumbered off in different directions to graze, and the *smychka* stopped working. We can see the process with exceptional clarity in the fifteenth century as old yoking mechanisms broke down.

In the fifteenth century, two large confederations emerged in the steppes of Central Asia and Mongolia: the Kazakh and the Oirat. Both formed powerful regional mobilization systems capable of modest predation on neighboring regions, but neither created a durable *smychka*. Their attempts to do so illustrate the difficulties of such a project, and the complexity of the maneuvers that political and military virtuosi such as Chinggis Khan and Timur had made seem simple.

## THE KAZAKH AND UZBEK STEPPES

In the Kazakh steppes north of Transoxiana, two distinct pastoralist confederations emerged early in the fifteenth century: the Kazakh and the Uzbek. Both were ruled by Jochid lineages descended from Orda or Shiban. And both would play a significant political, economic, and eventually symbolic role in the region

up to present times. The Kazakh and Uzbek eventually split along ecological lines: the Kazakh kept their base in the steppes where now they provide an ethnonym for modern Kazakhstan, while the Uzbek settled in the urbanized south of Transoxiana and provide an ethnonym for modern Uzbekistan.

Originally, the Kazakh steppes fell within the *ulus* of Jochi's eldest son, Orda, sometimes known as the "White Horde." But they also included the *ulus* of Batu's brother, Shiban, in the "Uzbek" steppes, north of the Caspian Sea. The ethnonym "Uzbek" probably referred, originally, to people of the Golden Horde, or the people of Khan Ozbeg.<sup>47</sup> Shiban's *ulus* is sometimes called the "Blue Horde." Both *uluses* had access to the cities of the Syr Darya and Semirechie, and the Silk Road trade routes that passed through these lands, while Orda's *ulus* also bordered on Oirat Mongol lands in Zungharia. For pastoralists in the Kazakh steppe, the natural mobilizational strategy was to control or tax resources from Silk Road commerce and from the cities of the Syr Darya and Transoxiana. But there is evidence that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there may have been small towns and areas of farming not just along the Syr Darya, but even in northern Kazakhstan, so even in the deep steppe there were opportunities to mobilize resources on a small scale from towns and farming regions.<sup>48</sup>

As we have seen, leaders from both the *uluses* of Orda and Shiban had played an active role in the politics of the Golden Horde after the extinction of the Batuid lineage in 1359. Toqtamish, a descendant of Orda, ruled Saray from 1377 to 1395, before being driven out by Timur, while Edigu, a descendant of Shiban, became the last ruler of the Golden Horde. Edigu claimed both Jochid ancestry and descent from the first Islamic caliph, Abu-Bakr. In steppe lore he would become a legendary figure, particularly among the Nogai (Mangit).<sup>49</sup>

After Edigu's death in 1420, power fragmented in the Central Asian steppes before the eventual emergence of two new confederations, loosely descended from the *uluses* of Orda and Shiban. In 1429, in "Chimgi-Tura" ("Chingis town," modern Tiumen') in western Siberia, a 17-year-old Shibanid chief, Abul-Khayr, was elected khan of a federation of 24 tribes from the "Uzbek" or Shibanid steppes. He proved an able leader, and stories of his rise are full of tropes familiar from the history of Chinggis Khan. His success in politics and war earned him the support of many regional leaders. Having defeated and executed his rival, Mahmud Khan, on the Tobol river, he "collected from his foe boundless spoil, ranging from rosy-cheeked slaves, racers, pack camels and tents, to hauberks, various arms and coats of mail, all of which were piled up before the khan's very tent. The khan then deigned to bestow them on his *amir-lar* and *bahadurlar* according to their rank and fame."<sup>50</sup> He raided Khorezm in 1431, gained the allegiance of tribes from the *ulus* of Orda, conquered several Syr Darya towns in 1446, and made Sygnak his capital.<sup>51</sup> By 1450, his rule extended from the Urals to Lake Balkhash and the Irtysh river. After the death of Timur's son, Shahrukh, in 1451, he began to play a role in succession contests in Samarkand, and married a daughter of Ulugh-Beg. This would create ties with urban Transoxiana that proved important a generation later and may have launched the migrations that would bring large numbers of Uzbek south.<sup>52</sup>

Abul-Khayr's treatment of Urgench, which he captured in 1431, suggests a ruler who understood the workings of the *smychka*, and the importance of gaining support both in the steppes and the cities. According to a contemporary report, Abul-Khayr

ordered the opening of the treasury, whose contents former rulers had gathered with great labor and many cares, and ordered two eminent emirs to sit at the doors of the treasury, as all of the commanders, companions of the khan and simple soldiers entered in twos and took as much [money and valuables] as they could take away and left. All the soldiers, according to the khan's command, [entered the treasury] and each took as much as they could and left.

Having done this, however, Abul-Khayr organized assemblies of the city's scholars, clerics, and poets to seek their support.<sup>53</sup>

With a bit more skill or luck, Abul-Khayr might have absorbed the Timurid domains in Transoxiana and once again yoked together the very different resources of Central Asia's cities and steppelands. However, such prospects were ended in 1457 when Abul-Khayr's forces were defeated by an Oirat army from western Mongolia. Abul-Khayr's authority was undermined and his forces split. In 1458, two descendants of Urus Khan, Giray and Janibek, whose father Abul-Khayr had killed, led 200,000 of Abul-Khayr's people eastwards to the Chu river in the Semirechie region of Moghulistan, whose ruler, Esen-buka-khan (1429–1462), granted them pasturelands in one of the few regions of steppe that was underpopulated.<sup>54</sup> The 1458 split would provide a foundation myth for the modern Kazakh and Uzbek nations. It may be that it divided Abul-Khayr's followers according to ancient divisions between the lineages of Orda and Shiban.

Abul-Khayr died in 1467, and Giray and Janibek assumed leadership over most of his followers. To those they now ruled, they provided both a new dynasty and a new ethnonym, that of "Kazakh," a word that meant something close to "freebooter" and is related to the word "Cossack." The Kazakh dynasty would endure for over 350 years.<sup>55</sup> Under Giray's son, Buyunduk (ruled 1480–1511),<sup>56</sup> the Kazakhs secured control of most of the Syr Darya region, making Yasi (later Turkestan) their capital. Buyunduk's successor, Kasim Khan (r. c.1509–1523), was a son of Janibek. During his reign, the Kazakhs formed a more or less stable khanate, with an urban base in the prosperous Syr Darya cities. Some considered Kasim Khan the most powerful ruler since Jochi, and the true founder of the Kazakh khanate. It was claimed he could field a million warriors. The Kazakh became a significant international power, and negotiated with Muscovy.<sup>57</sup> By Kasim's death in 1523, the Kazakhs controlled lands reaching from the Ural river to Semirechie.

Meanwhile, with a small group of followers, Abul-Khayr's grandson, Muhammad Shibani (1451–1510), fled west to Astrakhan. Then he returned and, with the support of the Yasawiyya Sufi order, whose members provided him with a retinue of a few hundred soldiers, he headed for the religious center of Bukhara.<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Shibani became a devout Muslim, eventually claiming the title of "Imam of the Age, the Caliph of the Merciful One," a way

of advertising his Sunni credentials to his Sufi supporters and also to the Shia ruler of Persia, Shah Isma'il.<sup>59</sup> For several years, like his later rival, the Timurid Babur, he and his armies roamed Transoxiana, trying to build a stable mobilizational system. In 1500, Muhammad Shibani seized Bukhara. The next year, he besieged Samarkand and expelled Babur.

Babur described the siege of Samarkand in his memoirs, which give a vivid account of warfare in this region. During the siege, which lasted many months, there were constant attacks and counter-attacks. Babur describes one occasion when the besiegers faked an attack on one side of the town, while sending several hundred men to scale the walls from another side, using siege ladders wide enough for several men to climb side by side.

Some Uzbeks were on the ramparts, some were coming up, when these four men arrived at a run, dealt them blow upon blow, and, by energetic drubbing, forced them all down and put them to flight. ... Another time Kasim Beg led his braves out through the Needle-makers' Gate, pursued the Uzbeks as far as Khoja Kafsher, unhorsed some and returned with a few heads.<sup>60</sup>

Eventually, the besiegers began to attack each night, beating drums and shouting beneath one of the city gates. And the city began to run short of supplies. People began to eat dogs and asses, and Babur knew the end was near when some fled the city:

The soldiers and peasantry lost hope and, by ones and twos, began to let themselves down outside the walls and flee. ... Trusted men of my close circle began to let themselves down from the ramparts and get away; begs of known name and old family servants were amongst them.

Eventually, Muhammad Shibani allowed Babur to leave on a journey into exile that would eventually take him to Delhi as founder of the Mughal dynasty.

In 1507 Muhammad Shibani conquered much of eastern Khorasan, finally ending Timurid power in the region. The Shibani conquest of Transoxiana was buoyed by a huge influx of perhaps two or three hundred thousand migrants from the Uzbek steppes to the more settled regions of Transoxiana. This migration reduced the demographic pressure in the Kazakh steppes that had fueled tribal conflicts in the late fifteenth century.<sup>61</sup> It also shifted the linguistic balance in Transoxiana from Persian towards Turkic languages.

In 1500, Muhammad Shibani signed a peace treaty with the Kazakh leader, Buyunduk. This partitioned Central Asia, more or less along ecological lines. Though it did not prevent bloody warfare along the Syr Darya in the next decade, the treaty did allow the Uzbek leaders to establish their power in Transoxiana, while the Kazakhs consolidated their grip on the Kazakh steppes. By 1500, there had emerged two Central Asian mobilizational systems, one based in the Kazakh steppes and along the Syr Darya, the other in Transoxiana. All the components of a new *smychka* were present, but no Timur appeared to yoke them together into a larger mobilizational system.

## MONGOLIA

After the collapse of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, no Mongolian power structures survived above the level of regional tribal leaders. But Mongolia was no longer a colony of China, and Ming China, whose leaders came from the Chinese heartland, showed little interest in Mongolia. Within Mongolia, traditional power structures re-emerged and local leaders began, once again, to form regional systems of rule.

Two larger regional coalitions appeared in the early fifteenth century. They are known to historians as the Khalkha and the Oirat. The Khalkha emerged in eastern Mongolia and had Chinggisid leaders, while the Oirat (Kalmyk in Turkic) emerged in western Mongolia and had non-Chinggisid leaders. Conflicts between these groupings recapitulated the Han era rivalries between the Xiongnu and Yüeh-chih, and the sixth- and seventh-century divisions within the Türk Empire. The rivalry between Oirat and Khalkha would persist until its apocalyptic finale in the mid-eighteenth century, when the Khalkha lands became a Chinese colony again, and the Oirat were destroyed by Chinese and Khalkha armies.

The Oirat are first mentioned in the writings of Rashid al-Din as western rivals of Chinggis Khan.<sup>62</sup> Because Qutuqa, an early thirteenth-century ancestor of the leading Oirat clans, had married daughters of Chinggis Khan and Jochi, the Oirat elites counted as *quda*, or marriage allies of the Chinggisids.<sup>63</sup> But, like Timur, they could not legitimately claim the title of “khan.” Like all steppe confederations, the Oirat included many different tribes, traditions, and languages. Some, such as the Uighurs and Kereyit, were not strictly Mongol. Oirat lands included prosperous agricultural regions and rich pasturelands, and because they straddled the eastern Silk Roads the Oirat, like the Mongols and Türk before them, collaborated with Central Asian merchants to control and tax trade along the eastern Silk Roads. This explains why many Muslim names appear within the Oirat ruling elites, and why Oirat tribute missions to China were often led by Central Asian merchants. Their commercial interests also explain why the Oirat were so keen to open markets on the Chinese border.

In the early fifteenth century, under Toghoon (d. 1438) and his son Esen (r. 1438–1454), the Oirat established a short-lived hegemony over the whole of Mongolia. Toghoon defeated the Khalkha in 1434 and secured control of much of Qaidu’s former territory of Zungharia, as well as the lands around Karakorum and north of the Chinese frontier.<sup>64</sup> In 1438, the Ming agreed to open horse markets where the Oirat and their allies could send tribute missions and trade with Chinese merchants. Not surprisingly, given the fat profits to be made through trade and diplomacy, many Oirat and merchants were keen to join the missions, so they grew in size, and their demands became more insistent. According to the official history of the Ming:

Formerly, Oirad emissaries had never exceeded fifty persons; [later] in order to obtain ranks and bestowals from the Court [they] increased to more than two thousand people. The court issued several decrees ordering reductions, but each

was ignored. Killing and looting occurred at the arrival and departure of each mission.<sup>65</sup>

In 1449, the Chinese refused to accept a “tribute” mission of 3,000 people. The Oirat leader, Esen, invaded China and captured the emperor, keeping him prisoner for a full year. In 1452/3 Esen defeated the eastern Mongolian khan, and proclaimed himself khan, the only non-Chinggisid ever to do so in Mongolia.<sup>66</sup> This breach with Mongolian political etiquette offended many Mongol leaders, including some of his own commanders.<sup>67</sup> But it seems that, unlike Temujin or Timur, he had also failed to build a sufficiently loyal and disciplined following. In 1454, he was murdered by chieftains disgruntled by his assumption of the title of khan and the miserly rewards he offered them. Nevertheless, Esen’s victories had shifted the balance of military power along China’s northern borders enough to persuade the Ming to start building a new and more powerful “Great Wall” along the southern edge of the Ordos.

With no obvious successor to Esen, the Oirat confederation collapsed. Though they had managed to assemble powerful armies and control significant flows of wealth for several decades, the Oirat had failed to build a durable *smychka*, or establish relations of equality with China. Geography undoubtedly complicated their task, for the western Mongolian homelands of the Oirat were far from any major agrarian power. This shielded them from attack, but limited the possibilities for mobilizing resources from sedentary regions.

## NOTES

- 1 The effects of the little Ice Age are the pivot of Parker, *Global Crisis*.
- 2 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 258.
- 3 Slightly different estimates can be found in Biraben, “Essai”; the crucial data is also available in *Cambridge World History, Vol. 5: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500CE–1500CE*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19.
- 4 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 359.
- 5 McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*; Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics,” 289.
- 6 Wagner et al., “*Yersinia pestis*.”
- 7 Schamiloglu, “The Golden Horde,” 2: 832.
- 8 Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy*, 42; Langer, “The Black Death in Russia,” 55–62.
- 9 Alef, “The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy,” 24–25.
- 10 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 223; on the bullion famine, Smith, “Trade and Commerce,” 249.
- 11 Schamiloglu, “Mongol or Not?”; Schamiloglu argues (199–200) that one of Timur’s main goals was to redirect trade from the northern routes to those south of the Caucasus.
- 12 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 278; and see the good account in Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 355–358; on what to call Lithuania in different periods, see Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*.
- 13 Schamiloglu, “The Golden Horde,” 833.

- 14 Fedorov-Davydov, *Obshchestvennyi Stroi*, 110, 125.
- 15 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 58–60.
- 16 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 60–61,
- 17 Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 24.
- 18 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 64.
- 19 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 259–261.
- 20 Cited in Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 266.
- 21 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 66.
- 22 Golden, *Introduction*, 309; on the date, Manz, *Tamerlane*, 48. Ibn Arabshah writes, “*Tamar* in Turkish means iron, but *lang* means lame”; Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 166. Ibn Khaldūn reported that he was “lame from an arrow which struck him while raiding in his boyhood, as he told me”; Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 175.
- 23 Cited from Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 174.
- 24 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 95–96.
- 25 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 1 and 36–37; Manz’s book is the best modern account of Timur’s empire.
- 26 See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 447–448, on the Qara’unas.
- 27 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 37.
- 28 Babur, *The Baburnama*; and see Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*.
- 29 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 42.
- 30 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 283.
- 31 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 15, 45, 74–75.
- 32 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 57.
- 33 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 37.
- 34 Egorov, *Istoricheskaya Geografiya*, 4.
- 35 Roemer, “Timur in Iran,” 55.
- 36 Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane*, 39, for Ibn Khaldūn’s rather laconic account, and the detailed notes on 93–97; quoted passage from 96.
- 37 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 116.
- 38 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 175.
- 39 Clavijo, *Narrative*, 171.
- 40 Clavijo, *Narrative*, 171.
- 41 Manz, *Tamerlane*, 109.
- 42 Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 183.
- 43 Dale, *Indian Merchants*, 20: “In the second half of the fifteenth century ... Temürid rulers presided over an expansion of irrigation canals in the Bukhara region.”
- 44 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 80; on *waqf*, see McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*.
- 45 On Khwaja Ahrar, see Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 140.
- 46 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 80–81.
- 47 Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 38.
- 48 Akhmedov, *Gosudarstvo Kochevykyh Uzbekov*, 75; Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 46.
- 49 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 100–101.
- 50 Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 39.
- 51 Klyashtorny and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 217–222.
- 52 Janabel, *The Rise of the Kazakh Nation*, 40, 43.
- 53 Akhmedov, *Gosudarstvo Kochevykyh Uzbekov*, 50.
- 54 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 71; Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 11.
- 55 Klyashtorny and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 236–240, 250–258.
- 56 Hambly, *Zentralasien*, 155, gives 1488–1509.



- 57 Klyashtornyi and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 275; on negotiations with Muscovy, Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 105.  
 58 Klyashtornyi and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 244–246.  
 59 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 106.  
 60 From Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 213.  
 61 Klyashtornyi and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 256–257.  
 62 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 53.  
 63 On the Oirat, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 419–423.  
 64 See Pokotilov, *History of the Eastern Mongols*, Ch. 4.  
 65 Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade*, 82, from the *Ming shi*, the Ming dynastic history.  
 66 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 52; Halkovic, *The Mongols of the West*, 4.  
 67 Adshad, *Central Asia in World History*, 159.

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## [4] *1350–1500: WESTERN INNER EURASIA*

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### *PICKING THE BONES OF THE GOLDEN HORDE*

West of the Urals, several different types of polity competed for control of the lands once ruled by the Golden Horde. (1) Fragments of the Golden Horde formed regional khanates, operating local versions of the *smychka*. (2) Two agrarian empires on the borders of Inner Eurasia, Lithuania/Poland and the Ottoman Empire, began to encroach on western Inner Eurasia. (3) Finally, Tver and Moscow, two vassal principalities in the forest lands of Rus', emerged as possible successors to the Golden Horde.

### *PASTORALIST SUCCESSOR STATES*

After the collapse of the Golden Horde, no pastoralist polity would ever again dominate the western regions of Inner Eurasia. In some ways this is surprising. After all, pastoralist khans inherited the geographical heartlands of the Golden Horde, as well as its cultural and political traditions.

There are two possible explanations. The first invokes contingency. No Timur or Chinggis Khan emerged with the luck, the skill, the ruthlessness, and the charisma needed to forge a ruling elite so disciplined that it could yoke together the region's steppes and settled regions. The second explanation invokes the momentum of long-term trends. The spread of farming from western Inner Eurasia – Inner Eurasia's long-delayed agricultural revolution – gave increasing demographic and economic heft to agrarian polities in the west. Slowly, the balance of power tipped against regional pastoralists in a prolonged seismic shift in power, wealth, and lifeways.

In the fifteenth century three new khanates emerged west of the Urals. The "Great Horde," based on the Volga delta and the pasturelands of the north Caucasus, was the natural successor to the Golden Horde. However, Timur's ruinous invasions and the decline of trade through the Volga delta

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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region impoverished the Horde and its leaders, forcing them to revert to crude booty raids on their neighbors. The power of Saray crumbled like that of Karakorum, and the Great Horde, though it survived for many decades, was finally destroyed in 1502 by the Crimean khanate. The Crimean khanate was created in 1449, from bases in Crimea and the Pontic steppes. It would survive under a single dynasty, the Girays, until 1783 and forge one of the most powerful polities in the region. Finally, the Kazan' khanate, based in the lands of the Volga Bulgars, existed for a century, from 1445 to 1552, before it was conquered by Ivan IV, Tsar of Muscovy. Chinggisid khans ruled each of the khanates, and each constructed some form of *smychka*. Their armies came from the pasturelands along the Volga or north of the Caucasus and Crimea, but their ruling elites and officials generally lived in the region's trading cities, grew wealthy from commerce, and adopted Islam.<sup>1</sup>

The Kazan' khanate was established by a Chinggisid, Ulugh-Muhammad (r. 1419–1445), a grandson of Toqtamish. Ulugh-Muhammad created the Kazan' khanate in the final stages of a remarkable career during which he had sampled rule in each of the three new khanates. He briefly ruled the Great Horde before being driven out and fleeing to the west. In the 1420s, he allied with the Lithuanian ruler Vitautas (r. 1392–1430). In 1427, Vitautas helped him become khan of Crimea, but in 1437 he was driven from Crimea and headed north. He defeated a Muscovite army, captured Prince Vasili II of Moscow, and charged a huge ransom for the prince's release. By 1445 he had taken up residence in Kazan' where he founded a new khanate.<sup>2</sup>

Ulugh-Muhammad's lineage would rule Kazan' until 1517. The Kazan' khanate recruited its armies from nearby steppelands, and its leaders, like the Volga Bulgars, identified themselves both as pastoralists and as Muslims. But its pastures were more restricted than those north of Crimea, and so were the flows of commerce through its realms. Kazan' could and did treat borderlands (including Rus') as looting zones. But its rulers lived in the cities of Volga Bulgaria, above all in Kazan' itself, and much of its material wealth came from taxes on trade between the lower Volga and the Baltic. With large farming populations, its economic base and social composition, apart from its Tatar elite, were similar to the rising power of Moscow, generating rivalries that echoed ancient conflicts between Volga Bulgaria and the principalities of Kievan Rus'. Yet Kazan' had far fewer resources than the major cities of Rus', and by the early sixteenth century Kazan' already looked like a client state of Moscow.

The Crimean khanate was formed in the former *ulus* of Nogai and Mamaq by Hajji-Giray, a disgruntled Chinggisid prince from the Great Horde, who, like Ulugh-Muhammad, had fled into exile in Lithuania. The leading Crimean clans, the Shirins, Barins, Arghins, and Kipchaks, invited him to become their ruler when they, too, broke with the Great Horde. He became khan in 1449, made Bakhchesaray his capital, issued coins of his own bearing the figure of an owl, and established a dynasty that would rule for more than three centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The khanate's heartland in the Crimean peninsula was agrarian, urbanized, cosmopolitan, and highly commercialized. In addition to Tatars, its population included Greeks, Italians, Armenians, and many Turkic-speaking Jews, as well as an itinerant population of merchants from Russia, Central Asia, and

the Mediterranean. Even the Crimean Tatars were largely sedentary. However, in the Pontic steppes to the north, Crimea's four major clans controlled large and powerful groups of pastoralists, many of them Nogai Tatars. There was a natural and ancient *smychka* between Pontic steppe armies and Crimea's trading cities. Herodotus had described similar relations almost 2,000 years earlier. Crimea's khans used their military power to tax trade routes running both east and west from Central Asia to the Mediterranean, and north and south from the Baltic and Rus' to Azerbaijan and Persia. They also harvested slaves captured from Lithuania and the principalities of Rus'. The khanate's core population in Crimea lived from agriculture, livestock herding, grape-growing, and trade. Geography gave the Crimean peninsula many advantages in building a well-balanced *smychka*.

To the south, the main threat came from the rising Ottoman Empire, and at first Hajji-Giray sought defensive alliances with Lithuania and Muscovy. But in 1478, the logic of shared religion and the Ottoman expulsion of the Genoese after conquering Caffa and much of the Crimean coast (in 1475) forced Hajji-Giray's son, Mengli-Giray (r. 1478–1514), to accept Ottoman suzerainty. Having been imprisoned by the Ottomans, he had little choice. The khanate would remain an Ottoman protectorate, while preserving considerable independence, and in the sixteenth century its armies would rival those of Muscovy and Lithuania/Poland.

## BORDERLAND EMPIRES: THE OTTOMAN AND LITHUANIAN EMPIRES

We will discuss the Ottoman and Lithuanian empires only in so far as their activities shaped Inner Eurasian history. But even a cursory examination of their role in the region can tell us much about the distinctive mobilizational challenges faced by Outer Eurasian empires that tried to expand into Inner Eurasia. Earlier Outer Eurasian empires, including Achaemenid Persia and the Han Empire, had dabbled in Inner Eurasian affairs, usually to defend themselves against pastoralist raiders. But despite their wealth and power, none succeeded in building durable Inner Eurasian empires. Why?

The problem was that it was extraordinarily difficult and expensive to use agrarian armies in the steppes, where there was little farming and few cities, and the benefits of invading the steppes rarely justified the massive cost. Armies had to bring most of their own food, fodder, fuel, and even water. Meanwhile, pastoral nomads were experts at harassing large, slow-moving infantry armies and their supply chains. Finally, there was little booty to be found in the steppes. As a result, Outer Eurasian polities rarely committed sufficient resources to the task of conquering and occupying Inner Eurasian lands.

The Osmanli or Ottoman Empire first took an interest in Inner Eurasia from the fifteenth century, as overlords of the Crimean khanate.<sup>4</sup> The Ottoman Empire was founded at the end of the thirteenth century by a Muslim warrior prince called Osman (?–1324), from a base in western Anatolia. In 1326 Osman's successors captured Bursa and made it their capital. In 1354, they

captured Gallipoli, on the European side of the Byzantine Empire. Under Murad I (ruled 1362–1389) they continued to expand in the Balkans, building the first slave-based Janissary army (“new army” or *yeni çeri*) in the 1360s. They used Janissaries to conquer Sofia in 1382 and then most of the Balkans, after defeating Serbia in 1389 at the battle of Kosovo. The Balkan region, while remaining culturally distinct from the Muslim Empire, would become one of the wealthiest and most populous provinces of the emerging empire, and in many ways its fiscal and geopolitical heartland.<sup>5</sup>

In 1402, after a devastating defeat at the hands of Timur, the Ottomans rebuilt their Janissary army. Like many earlier Muslim armies, it was formed from captives with no loyalties to anyone but the Ottoman state. The *devşirme* system had emerged in the 1380s to supply non-Muslim children, mostly from the Balkans, who were captured or taken as tribute to be trained as officials or soldiers. The Janissaries constituted one of Europe’s first standing armies and one of the first to make extensive use of firearms. The Osmanlis were the first European state to form a permanent artillery unit; this certainly existed by 1400, when they used artillery against Constantinople. By the middle of the fifteenth century, they had also adopted from Hungarian models the idea of a *wagenburg*, or a linked chain of wagons armed with artillery to break cavalry charges.<sup>6</sup>

In 1453, Muhammad II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) conquered Constantinople, and his empire became the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean. The conquest of Constantinople marked a political, cultural, and military revolution in the eastern Mediterranean. It drove European traders west into the Atlantic, where eventually they would find new routes to Asia and to the Americas. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople also reoriented the politics of the Pontic steppes, as the Ottoman Empire began to dabble in Inner Eurasia in order to protect its interests in the Balkans. By the late fifteenth century, an Ottoman navy, built by Bayezid II (1481–1512), dominated the Black Sea. In 1475, the Ottomans conquered Crimea. They made the Crimean khans their suzerains, and took the major Black Sea ports from the Genoese and Venetians.

The Lithuanian Empire and its successor, the joint Lithuanian/Polish polity, formed by the Union of Kreva in 1385, would play a major role in the western borderlands of Inner Eurasia until the eighteenth century. While Lithuania counts as an Inner Eurasian polity, Poland counts as an Outer Eurasian polity. So the Union of Kreva created a “Commonwealth” that would be tugged in opposite directions by the different religious, fiscal, political, and military demands of Inner and Outer Eurasia.

The Lithuanian Empire had emerged in the power vacuum created in Inner Eurasia’s western borderlands by the Mongol conquests. Soon after Batu conquered Rus’, a pagan chief, Mindaugas (Mendovg, r. c.1240–1263), conquered much of Lithuania from a base in the city of Vilnius.<sup>7</sup> Under Mindaugas’s successors, Lithuania defended itself against the Livonian order in modern Estonia, and began expanding into the soft western borderlands of the Golden Horde, in modern Belarus and Ukraine. Lithuanian rulers built forts to control the riverine trades from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and between Rus’ and

western Europe. By 1300, Lithuania was a major eastern European power under a dynasty later known as the Gediminids after its best known ruler, Grand Prince Gediminas (Gedymin, r. 1316–1342). Gediminas was a contemporary of Khan Ozbeg of the Golden Horde.<sup>8</sup> As the Golden Horde disintegrated in the mid-fourteenth century, Gedymin's son and successor, Algirdas (Olgerd, r. 1345–1377), declared that "All Rus' must belong to the Lithuanians."<sup>9</sup> In 1362 Algirdas captured Kiev. In 1363, in alliance with Toqtamish, he defeated an army from the Golden Horde at the battle of Blue Waters. Lithuania now controlled most of modern Belarus and much of western Ukraine. Its power lapped the shores of the Black Sea and it was the largest polity in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The challenge for Lithuania's rulers was to hold together an extraordinarily diverse polity. By the late fourteenth century, the largely pagan Lithuanians ruled a population of almost 2 million people, most of whom spoke East Slav languages and were Orthodox Christians.<sup>11</sup> Lithuania's economy, like that of Rus', was based on peasant farming of limited productivity, so that the region's elites sought wealth by taxing trade, or capturing and selling slaves, booty, and land. Lithuania was particularly keen to control trade along the Dnieper by allying with and eventually conquering Kiev, Galicia, and Volhynia, even as those principalities continued paying tributes to Saray.<sup>12</sup> Through strategic marriage alliances, the Gediminids also built client relations with western principalities of Rus' such as Smolensk and Pskov, and even, briefly, with Moscow.

The 1385 Union of Kreva transformed the politics and interests of this ramshackle empire by uniting Lithuania with Poland. The Lithuanian King Jagiello (r. 1377–1434) married the Polish Queen Jadwiga after converting to Catholicism in order to secure an ally against the Teutonic Knights. The union created a single Catholic dynasty ruling two formally separate kingdoms, with subjects whose diverse linguistic, cultural, economic, and religious traditions pulled them in opposite directions, westwards towards central Europe, or south and east towards Ukraine, the Black Sea, and the Golden Horde.<sup>13</sup> Ironically, in 1384 Jagiello had nearly married a daughter of Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi of Moscow, a marriage that might have drawn Lithuania to the east, turning it into a major Inner Eurasian power and a possible successor to the Golden Horde. Jagiello's cousin and rival, Vitautas, ruled Lithuania as "*dux*," under Jagiello, the "*supremus dux*," but retained considerable autonomy. As the Golden Horde fell apart, Vitautas built a chain of forts between Kiev and the Black Sea that gave him control of the trade routes from the Black Sea through Kiev and eastern Europe.<sup>14</sup> In 1399, however, his armies were checked at the Vorskla river by the armies of Edigu, the last ruler of the Golden Horde. Vitautas's defeat was caused in part by the desertion of his former ally and Edigu's rival, Toqtamish.

Further east, Vitautas gained partial suzerainty over the rising principality of Moscow, though Moscow remained a vassal state of the Jochid khanate. Prince Vasilii I of Moscow (r. 1389–1425) married Vitautas's daughter, and after becoming grand prince in 1389, he accepted his Lithuanian father-in-law as his suzerain until Vitautas's death 40 years later. Early in the fifteenth century, then, it was Lithuania that seemed to have replaced the Golden Horde



as the imperial power in Rus'. Vitautas controlled Smolensk, enjoyed suzerainty over Moscow, and considerable influence over Vladimir, Tver', Riazan', and Novgorod, while his power also reached deep into the Tatar steppes.<sup>15</sup>

However, Lithuania's partial hegemony over Rus' did not outlive Vitautas, who died in 1430. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople created a new rival for control of the Pontic coastal polities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and in the 1480s Lithuania lost its outlets on the Black Sea. After 1475, when the Crimean khanate became a client of the Ottoman Empire and an ally of Moscow, there began a period of almost 50 years during which Crimean armies regularly attacked Lithuanian territory, capturing vast numbers of slaves. Crimean armies attacked Kiev in 1482, penetrated far into Poland in 1490, and attacked Vilnius in 1505.<sup>16</sup> By the late fifteenth century, the ambitions of Lithuania/Poland's rulers in Inner Eurasia seemed to have been checked.

### *THE WEST: AGRARIAN SUCCESSOR STATES AND THE AGRARIAN SMYCHKA*

The third group of possible successor states to the Golden Horde included some of the principalities of Rus'.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the borderland empires the Rus' principalities could not avoid the mobilizational logic of Inner Eurasia. Here, as in parts of North Africa and Southwest Asia, polities based on agriculture emerged in regions long dominated by pastoral nomads. That changed many of the rules and strategies of state formation. So in this region it may prove illuminating to think of state formation using the slightly contrived metaphor of an agrarian *smychka*.

Here, too, state formation meant yoking together groups with different life-ways, cultures, and methods of mobilization. But while the nomadic *smychka* yoked groups divided by ecology and geography, the agrarian *smychka* yoked groups divided by class. It used the managerial and military skills of landed elites to mobilize the energy and resources of scattered populations of peasants. If in the nomadic *smychka* the role of leadership was to coordinate the actions of nomadic armies, in the agrarian *smychka* leaders had to coordinate the mobilizational activities of diverse, geographically scattered petty overlords in order to build armies. Local lords, in their turn, mobilized the labor, produce, timber, and other resources of local peasants. The agrarian *smychka* yoked together the productive energies of peasants and the mobilizational energy of local overlords to form, train, and supply armies that could protect the system from both external and internal enemies.

In Inner Eurasia, where resources were thin and scattered over vast areas, the mobilizational challenges of the agrarian *smychka* were particularly difficult. People, livestock, and resources had to be collected over vast areas. Yet the farming life, unlike the nomadic life, did not provide a natural training in warfare, so soldiers had to be specially trained. They also had to be supplied with food, equipment, horses, and weaponry. Furthermore, while in nomadic

societies it was possible to mobilize most adult males, in agrarian regions it was possible to mobilize only a small proportion of the population, while the rest had to keep growing the crops that fed the army and paid for its weapons and equipment. This meant that, in order to form an army of comparative size to those of their pastoralist rivals, agrarian elites had to mobilize from much larger populations. So the agrarian *smychka* demanded more human, material, and financial resources and much more organization than the pastoralist *smychka*. It could succeed only if it enjoyed superiority in human, material, and organizational resources, and that superiority had to be very large indeed before it translated into a clear military advantage.

There is no need to overwork the metaphor of an agrarian *smychka*. Nevertheless, it may help bring out some distinctive mobilizational advantages and disadvantages of agrarian and pastoralist societies in Inner Eurasia. Agrarian societies suffered from significant military disadvantages, but they also enjoyed some important advantages, and these would slowly increase over many centuries.

First, clan and tribal structures were much weaker in agrarian societies, and created fewer barriers to centralized power. Ties between villages, unlike ties between pastoralist camping groups or clans, were extremely weak, so rulers and landed elites could usually control and tax villages one by one. As Marx famously argued in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, peasants find it hard to defend themselves because they lack a sense of clan or class solidarity.

... the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sackful of potatoes. In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes ... they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants ... they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name ... They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.<sup>18</sup>

In Inner Eurasia, remoteness and isolation magnified these perennial weaknesses of peasant villages, and enhanced the power of the elites that “represented” them.

In Inner Eurasia, agrarian societies also enjoyed better prospects for growth than pastoralist societies. While pastoral nomadism had probably reached a peak of productivity as early as the first millennium BCE, agriculture was new in much of Inner Eurasia, and had room to expand. In any case, farming depends on plants more than livestock, so it mobilizes from lower on the food chain than pastoralism. That is why agriculture can generate more calories and support larger and more concentrated populations than pastoral nomadism. Over time these advantages accumulated, giving Inner Eurasia’s agrarian regions more and more human and material resources until, eventually, the balance of power tipped decisively, and agrarian societies began to smother their nomadic rivals.

Meanwhile, as long as the balance of power in Inner Eurasia still favored pastoral nomads, agrarian polities had much to learn from the traditional *smychka*,

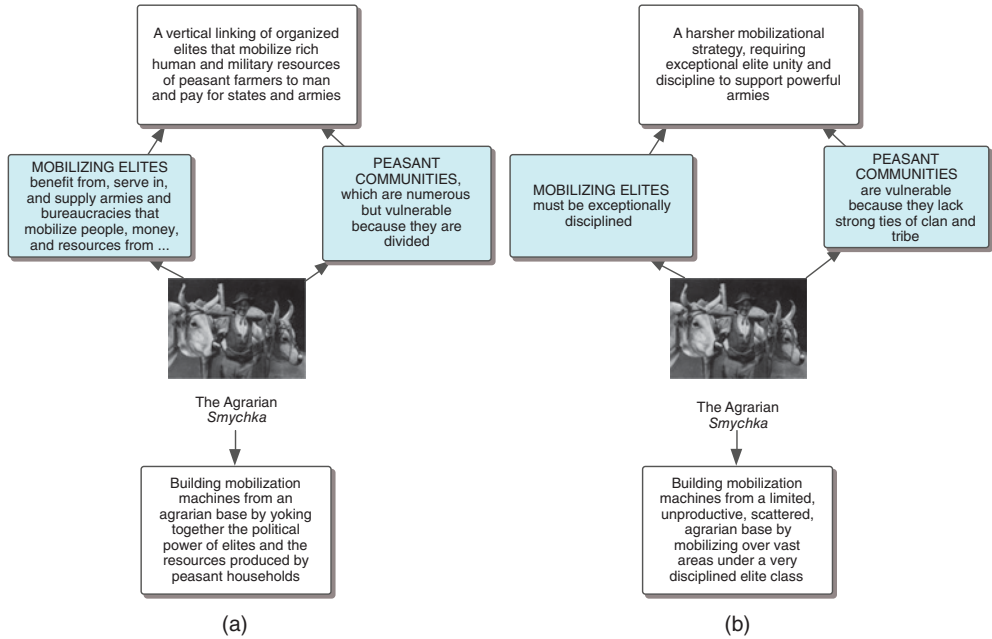


Figure 4.1a,b Two forms of the agrarian *smychka*.

and the many different ways it managed warfare, commerce, and the distinctive challenges of mobilization in Inner Eurasia (Figure 4.1a,b).<sup>19</sup>

### RUS’ AND THE GOLDEN HORDE: 1237–1380

Before Batu’s invasion, the principalities of Kievan Rus’ were already using simple forms of the agrarian *smychka* to mobilize armies that could protect them against the loosely organized pastoral nomadic groups in the Pontic steppes. But Batu’s armies posed entirely new military challenges. They were better led, much larger, much better disciplined, and more ruthless than the steppe societies familiar to the princes of Rus’. The Mongol invasion raised the bar for successful mobilization throughout Inner Eurasia, and leaders of Rus’ had to learn from it fast if they were to survive. It exposed the fundamental political, organizational, economic, and military weaknesses of the Rus’ principalities.

The first weakness was political. Rus’ was divided. Though formally subject to the grand princes of Vladimir, by the early thirteenth century the principalities of Rus’ were in practice independent, and each mobilized its own resources and armies. The Orthodox Church created a loose sense of religious identity, even if the real religion of most peasants had more to do with shamanic or magical traditions than with Christian theology. But a shared commitment to Orthodox Christianity was not enough to prevent endemic warfare between principalities over territory and booty. When Batu’s armies invaded in 1237,

they were able to pick off the capital cities of the major principalities one by one.

The second weakness was administrative. The princes of Rus' had remarkably little power. Even in the fourteenth century, "Other than the swords of his retinue, a prince had only the aura of his office to make men do his will."<sup>20</sup> Princely armies of the Mongol era may even have been smaller than those of the Kievan era, just as princely households were probably poorer.<sup>21</sup>

The third weakness was economic. The armies of Rus' were small because surpluses were small. Climates were harsh. On average only 140 days a year were frost free.<sup>22</sup> Most soils were acidic, forest *podzols*, leached of nutrients and with low fertility. To farm, peasants had to clear the land, often using techniques akin to modern "slash-and-burn" farming. Then they plowed the cleared land using light, two-tined plows (the *sokha*), often moving around stumps rather than removing them. The primary crops had to be hardy. Rye, oats, and barley worked, while hay was cut to feed livestock. The fertility of the ash-covered soil would decline within a few years, after which new clearings would be made, and the older clearings would be left fallow for several decades. During the fifteenth century, more intensive, three-field systems began to appear, particularly where slash-and-burn farmers met up with each other ("where axe met axe" in the traditional phrase). Under the three-field system, one field would be left fallow each year, while one would be planted in spring with autumn crops and a third would be planted in the fall with crops that would be harvested the next summer. For such systems, heavier, usually horse-drawn plows were necessary, and livestock was crucial both for haulage and to provide manure. But to feed livestock farmers had to set aside special hayfields that, like fallow fields, could no longer feed humans. Even these more intensive systems yielded small and unreliable surpluses. Rarely did harvests amount to more than three times what was sown, so that even a small reduction in the harvest could mean famine.

With low and precarious yields, and small communities scattered over huge areas, mobilizing agrarian surpluses was extremely difficult. The existence of large, underpopulated regions on the northern, eastern, and southern borders of Rus' added to the difficulty because, if pressed too hard, peasants could flee oppressive overlords. These difficulties explain why governments were so keen to mobilize non-agricultural resources, including forest products such as fish, berries, furs, timber, and honey, or livestock products from regions bordering the steppes. These goods could then be sent down the Volga or through the Pontic steppes to markets on the Black Sea, or westwards through the Baltic to the cities of Europe. All the towns of Rus' levied taxes on commerce, while nobles, princes, and (later) monasteries taxed peasants and towns.

The trade in furs was particularly important; indeed, furs were so abundant and generated such huge revenues that, like oil today, they created a sort of "resource dependency."<sup>23</sup> (By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the trade in furs may have accounted for 10 to 25 percent of government revenue; a similar magnitude to the 25 percent yielded by oil and gas in 2005–2010.)<sup>24</sup> Furs could also be used as the Chinese government used silks, as gifts to foreign envoys, or as an alternative to cash payments. The best furs, those

with the thickest pelts, could be found only in the far north, and since at least the eleventh century, merchants and boyars of Novgorod had traveled up the Sukhona, Vychegda, and Pechora rivers to the lands of the Finnic-speaking Chud and Permians to extract high-quality furs by force or trade or tribute (*iasak*). Because indigenous communities saw little commercial value in them, furs offered immense possibilities for arbitrage as long as natives could be made to surrender them as tribute or persuaded to trade them for iron or trinkets or alcohol or tobacco or firearms. Revenues from the fur trade were shared between merchants and princes and their Mongol overlords. Growing demand for furs in Europe and the Muslim world drove colonization, as nearby regions were overhunted and new areas were opened up for exploitation. Eventually, increasing demand would drive Russian traders and their military escorts eastwards through Russia and into Siberia, just as it would eventually drive European traders westwards through North America.

The fourth weakness of the Rus' principalities was military. Situated between agrarian regions and steppes, they faced two very different types of enemies and needed two very different types of armies, or armies that could do very different jobs. Cavalry worked on both fronts, but had to be used in different ways in the steppes or urban sieges. Before the middle of the fourteenth century, the princes of Rus' mobilized armies in the simplest possible way, relying on informal ties of kinship and patronage. They assembled their own retinues, consisting of armed servitors and slaves from their own households and estates. Then they summoned their boyars and other members of the princely family to assemble with their retinues and meet at a particular time and place.<sup>25</sup> In a crisis they could levy urban militias, but few town dwellers had military training and few towns could spare many recruits. So town militias were mostly used to move and transport fodder, supplies, and equipment. In the mid-thirteenth century, the most important units in a princely army were often units of Tatar troops supplied by their Tatar overlords or hired as mercenaries. No wonder princely armies were small. In the early Mongol period they rarely included more than a few hundred men. If joined by allies, and perhaps by pastoralist contingents and militias from the towns, they might amount to a few thousand men.

Rus' armies were also undisciplined and untrained. There was no certainty that troops would show up, or, if they did, that they would fight on the right side. It was almost impossible to coordinate their movements on the battlefield, or to maintain discipline, particularly if there was a chance for looting, as booty or the capture of enemy troops for ransom provided one of the few rewards of soldiering. The one modest advantage enjoyed by Rus' armies was long experience of fighting each other and pastoral nomads. Most princely armies were dominated by cavalry, and had some experience of the wars of speed, mobility, and deceit typical in the steppes. Inter-princely wars, like most wars in medieval Europe, were dominated by sieges, because cities warehoused wealth, and controlled the resources of surrounding lands.<sup>26</sup> Pitched battles were unusual. They mostly occurred when one side tried to relieve a besieged city. When battles did occur, they were usually chaotic and small-scale affairs. Princes and commanders were reluctant to waste armies raised

at great cost and effort, and usually retreated when faced with clearly superior forces.

These weaknesses explain why the princes of Rus' had no choice about submitting and collaborating after Batu's invasion in 1237. Those princes that submitted could secure a *iarlik* or seal of princely office granted by the khans. They could also expect some Mongol military protection. But the khans were demanding overlords. Princes had to collect and hand over large amounts in tribute, and to take part in punitive raids on other principalities. Alexander Nevskii, who became prince of Novgorod just 15 years after Batu's invasion, received the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir (from 1252–1263) in return for a pledge of loyalty and help with Mongke's census of the Russian lands. In Novgorod, he used his own troops to protect Mongol census takers, knowing that resistance would provoke devastating retaliation. At the cost of humiliating symbolic concessions (the humiliation was real enough, and is reflected in chronicle accounts), Alexander Nevskii retained some independence in north-eastern Rus', and avoided ruinous punitive raids.<sup>27</sup>

Forests provided some protection because they reduced the mobility of nomadic armies, so, while steppe armies could launch devastating raids, only small contingents could stay in the north for longer periods. Soon, the khans of the Golden Horde discovered it was easier to control Rus' indirectly through its princes. Indirect rule allowed Russian princes to build and maintain modest mobilizational machines that could raise the tributes and troops required by the Golden Horde. The Mongols also found it easier to manage Rus' through a single grand prince, and this strategy would enhance the power and authority of the most powerful principalities, creating a fiercely competitive arena in which there could only be one final winner.

## THE RISE OF MOSCOW: 1240–1400

Princes ruled from their capital cities. But with tiny agrarian surpluses, towns and cities were small. In thirteenth-century Rus' no more than 30 towns had more than a few thousand inhabitants. The Mongol invasion ruined Kiev and Vladimir, the seats of the Kievan grand princes. By the end of the thirteenth century, other cities, such as Moscow and Tver', were richer, more populous, and more powerful. Moscow and Tver' also enjoyed strategic positions on the river systems that controlled the trade routes from Central Asia to the Baltic and Europe, and control of these routes was crucial because trade paid for much of the tribute demanded by Saray.

In the late thirteenth century, Novgorod and Pskov were the largest and wealthiest of the Rus' cities. Far from the steppes, they had been spared during the wars of conquest. Novgorod had just over 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>28</sup> It had grown wealthy by trading the furs and other resources of the far north through the Baltic to Europe, or through Rus', the Volga river, and the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and Central Asia. But, though wealthy, Novgorod was militarily weak. Agricultural productivity was low, and its vast hinterlands underpopulated. Its oligarchic, merchant-dominated assemblies, or *veche*, elected and controlled their princes, who were usually too weak to raise large armies. So

other, more powerful principalities, such as Rostov-Suzdal', began to siphon resources from Novgorod's northern empire. In the western parts of Rus', cities such as Smolensk or Kiev were weakened by their proximity to the rising power of Lithuania, while cities such as Riazan', on the borders between the forest and the steppe, were vulnerable to steppe raids.

By the reign of Khan Ozbeg, early in the fourteenth century, Tver' and Moscow had emerged as the most powerful principalities of Rus'. Neither was large. Moscow controlled about 20,000 sq. kilometers and had a total population of just a few hundred thousand people.<sup>29</sup> However, both principalities combined modest agrarian wealth with strategic positions on the commercial waterways linking the Baltic to Central Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. And both were far enough from Lithuania and the Horde to enjoy some protection.

Saray's rulers took lineage seriously and usually respected local rules of succession. So, for the most part, they had supported the grand princes of Vladimir since the time of Alexander Nevskii. In 1304, Saray granted the *iarlik* as grand prince to the legitimate heir, Prince Mikhail Yaroslavich of Tver', the son of Alexander Nevskii's brother and successor, Yaroslav. This was a golden opportunity for Tver'. But Mikhail missed his chance. His rival, Yurii Daniilovich, prince of Moscow (the elder son of Alexander Nevskii's son, Daniil), courted Saray more assiduously, ingratiating himself with Khan Ozbeg by demonstrating his control over the rich flow of goods through Novgorod, which supplied most of the silver for the *vykhod* or tribute. In 1316 Ozbeg transferred the title of grand prince to Yurii, despite his lack of legitimate claims to the title.<sup>30</sup> Yurii returned from Saray with a royal bride (the khan's sister), and a contingent of Tatar troops. Next year, Prince Mikhail of Tver' defeated Yurii's forces and their Tatar allies, and captured both Ozbeg's sister and his Tatar general, Kavgadii. The khan's sister would die in captivity. Mikhail and Yurii were summoned to the Horde, and in 1319 Khan Ozbeg had Mikhail executed. In the next four years, another four Jochid armies were sent to Rus' to uphold the khan's authority and that of his new client, the prince of Moscow. The resistance suggests how reluctant most princes were to accept the princes of Moscow as legitimate grand princes.<sup>31</sup>

In 1322, Ozbeg returned the title of grand prince to the prince of Tver', Mikhail's son, Dmitrii. But again, Tver' missed its chance. In 1327, its citizens rebelled against an oppressive Mongol official, Schelkan. Ivan Daniilovich (r. 1327–1340), the new prince of Moscow since the death of his brother Yurii in 1327, joined a Mongol army in attacking Tver'. Tver' was sacked, many of its citizens killed or enslaved, and its new prince, Alexander, fled to Lithuania.<sup>32</sup> Prince Ivan Daniilovich of Moscow was made grand prince in 1331, and over the next few decades the title began to seem part of the natural heritage of Moscow.

These two episodes cannot convey the complexities of the long contest for hegemony between Moscow and Tver', but they suggest some of the factors that determined its outcome. Crucial were the political skills of Ivan Daniilovich himself. He worked hard to cultivate support within the Golden Horde, spending many years in Saray, ingratiating himself with Khan Ozbeg

and his advisers. The Soviet historian Nasonov calculated that he spent more than half of his reign in Saray or en route to the capital.<sup>33</sup> But he also proved a competent gatherer of the Mongol tribute; hence, perhaps, his nickname of “Kalita” or “moneybags.” His mobilizational skills contributed to the growing prosperity of Moscow itself because, as grand prince, he made other princes hand over their shares of the *vykhod* to him before passing them on to Saray. That let him reduce the relative burden on his own principality. By the death of Prince Dmitrii Donskoi in 1389, just half a century after Ivan Kalita’s accession, Moscow and its immediate surroundings contributed hardly anything to the tribute payments.<sup>34</sup>

With competent princes, Moscow’s advantages multiplied. Prince Ivan used his growing wealth and influence to forge marriage alliances that bound other principalities such as Beloozero and Iaroslavl’ closer to Moscow. These alliances helped him muscle in on new sources of revenue, including the rich trade networks of Novgorod. As early as 1333 marriage alliances gave him control over Vychehda and Pechora, northern lands rich in furs that could be traded on to Saray and the Black Sea, or used as gifts or bribes or in diplomatic negotiations.<sup>35</sup> Ivan also gained the support of the Orthodox Church. In the 1320s, Metropolitan Peter (1309–1326) moved to Moscow. He had supported Moscow in its conflicts with Tver’, and after his death in 1326 and canonization as a saint, his Moscow tomb became a shrine. Ivan persuaded Peter’s successor, Theognostos (1328–1353), to settle in Moscow too, and during his long reign as metropolitan, Moscow became the permanent headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>36</sup>

Spared from Mongol raids for some 30 years under Ivan and his successors, Moscow grew wealthy and attracted increasing numbers of merchants, artisans, and impoverished princes. Moscow also shared in an economic and commercial boom that benefited much of northern Rus’ in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Economic growth is apparent in urban construction. In 1367, Moscow built new stone walls that protected it from sieges. In Rus’ as a whole, perhaps 150 new monasteries were built in the century after 1350, often in remote areas, many inspired by the founding of the Holy Trinity Monastery by St. Sergius of Radonezh (*c.*1314–1392).<sup>37</sup> The historian Kliuchevskii described this as “monastic colonization.”<sup>38</sup>

Moscow’s leaders also managed to build an exceptionally united and disciplined elite group. In Rus’, as in the steppes, elite discipline was vital because human, material, and commercial resources were so thinly scattered that significant wealth could be controlled only by elite groups capable of coordinated mobilization over large areas. This was not a task for independent feudal lords, but demanded the synchronized action of many local lords. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Muscovy’s *boyar* elite developed an exceptionally unified political culture. No other class or organization showed such unity, neither the church, nor the townspeople, nor the merchantry. Nancy Kollmann writes:

The boyars and grand princes depended upon their collective strength during the incessant warfare of the fourteenth century to maintain and increase their resources. Excessive internecine conflict (exemplified by the fifteenth-century



dynastic war) threatened the elite's power and consequently their livelihood. The boyars' military might also acted to restrain violence and to promote the grand prince's respect, for the boyars were armed and dangerous. In the fourteenth century their retinues formed the bulk of the sovereign's armies. In the very real leverage they possessed with regard to the sovereign might be found a source of the respect, personal association, and self-limiting constraints that are part of the political system we are examining.<sup>39</sup>

Why and how such a disciplined elite culture emerged in the principality of Moscow remains somewhat mysterious. Moscow's nobles may have modeled their behavior on the autocratic political culture of the Golden Horde, which they came to know more intimately than the leaders of any other principality. But Moscow's growing wealth and security surely played a role, because they made its prince an attractive patron to nobles from other principalities, even from Lithuania and the Golden Horde. Moscow's princely family also enjoyed a run of demographic good fortune. The ancient tradition of dividing a prince's inheritance between all living heirs could rapidly destroy even the wealthiest lineages. In the fourteenth century, accidents such as the plague pruned the princely line of the Daniilovichi to a single stem through which all its wealth flowed. Between 1353, when Ivan II succeeded his brother Simeon, and 1425, no younger brothers would survive to challenge the succession of a dying prince's sons. Dmitrii Donskoi (r. 1362–1389) shared the principality only with his cousin, Vladimir Andreevich, and the two ruled amicably, with Vladimir Andreevich recognizing the sovereignty of his cousin and loyally handing on his shares of the Jochid tribute.<sup>40</sup>

By 1400, Moscow was by far the wealthiest, the largest, and the most powerful of the Rus' principalities. Its growing military power first became apparent in 1380 at the battle of Kulikovo against Emir Mamaq. However, Toqtamish's devastating raid in 1382 showed that Moscow was still weaker militarily than a declining Golden Horde. Moscow also lacked the reach or influence or prestige of Lithuania, which now controlled most of the Rus' principalities along the Dnieper, including Kiev. Indeed, Lithuania would remain the dominant power in the west until the second half of the fifteenth century. As we have seen, Prince Vasilii I of Moscow (ruled 1389–1425) accepted the suzerainty of Vitautas, his father-in-law and Lithuania's ruler for several decades.

## MOSCOW, 1400–1500: CIVIL WAR AND REUNIFICATION

During the long reign of Vasilii II (1425–1462), the cohesion of Moscow's elite was tested and tempered during a vicious succession struggle between two branches of the Daniilovichi. In 1432, Khan Ulugh-Muhammad of the Great Horde (the eventual founder of the Kazan' khanate) granted the title of grand prince to Vasilii II, the son of Vasilii I. However, for the first time since 1353, a brother, Yurii of Galich, had survived the dying prince. He seized the throne in 1433. But he failed to gain the support of Moscow's boyars and other leaders, and was forced to return the principality to Vasilii. Over the next 20 years, a series of similar contests showed that Vasilii II enjoyed widespread

support within the boyar elite, despite his limited political and military skills. When Vasilii II died in 1462, he had no surviving brothers and his son, the future Ivan III, inherited the throne unchallenged.

The civil wars of the mid-fifteenth century mark a critical turning point in the building of a Muscovite mobilizational machine. They were fought with traditional princely and boyar retinues, but by their end the prince of Moscow was beginning to concentrate large military forces in his own hands.

The war destroyed Vasilii's most powerful rivals for the title of grand prince and led to the annexation of their patrimonies and the takeover of their retinues. Other princes, already weakened economically through generations of partible inheritance, now found their lands so devastated they had little choice but to become vassals of the prince of Moscow. The few remaining independent princes were forced to pay Moscow a heavy tribute that left them too little revenue to maintain sizeable military retinues; Tver' principality, once Moscow's most serious rival, could no longer field more than 600 men.<sup>41</sup>

Independent princes offered their service to Moscow's grand prince, and service soon turned into vassalage, as the wealth of former princes dwindled and that of Muscovy grew.

After his return to Moscow in 1447, Vasilii II issued coins proclaiming himself "sovereign of all Rus'."<sup>42</sup> In 1452 he established a client Tatar state, the khanate of Kasimov, on the border with Kazan', for Kasim, a son of Ulugh-Muhammad of Kazan', who had sought service with Muscovy. This gave Muscovy loose claims on the khanate of Kazan' that would be cashed in a century later by Ivan IV. Vasilii II also created a closer relationship with the Orthodox Church, after appointing a new Metropolitan, Iona of Riazan', in 1448 without consulting Constantinople. When Constantinople fell in 1453, this decision began to look like a remarkable act of foresight. The Russian Orthodox Church was now independent of all foreign authority, allowing an eventual convergence of religious and national identities that would resonate with all levels of Russian society.

When he died in 1462, Vasilii II passed the title of grand prince to his heir, Ivan III, without seeking Tatar consent. He was the first grand prince to do so. In his will, he enhanced his son's power by granting him more than half of his own lands, including the most populous and wealthiest parts of Muscovy.<sup>43</sup> These steps towards a new principle of inheritance in the senior line can be traced in princely testaments from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries.<sup>44</sup> They ensured that Muscovy, unlike so many of its rivals, would not divide its wealth and power each time a prince died, enabling it to eclipse principalities that persisted with such practices.

Ivan III ruled for 43 years from 1462 to 1505, and was succeeded by his son, Vasilii III (1505–1533). During these two reigns, Muscovy became a major political, economic, and military power. Sustained territorial expansion demonstrated and enhanced Muscovy's power, increasing its population, its economic and commercial resources, and its ability to attract wealthy and loyal servitors. In 1300, Moscow controlled less than the 47,000 sq. kilometers of

today's Moscow *oblast'*. By the accession of Ivan III in 1462, it ruled *c.*430,000 sq. kilometers, or almost 10 times as much. At the death of Vasili III in 1533, Muscovy ruled *c.*2,800,000 sq. kilometers, almost seven times the territory inherited by Ivan III.

Moscow conquered Riazan' between 1456 and 1521. Iaroslavl' was conquered in 1463; Perm in 1472; Rostov in 1474. Novgorod, by far the largest of these acquisitions, was conquered in 1478, giving Moscow access to vast territories in the north, and control over the fur trade. Its old rival, Tver', was conquered in 1485. During the reign of Vasili III, Muscovy gobbled up Pskov (1510), Smolensk (1514), and the last parts of Riazan' (1521), enhancing its control over trade routes west to Poland and south to the Black Sea.

Under Ivan III, Muscovy became a fully independent state. At his accession, Ivan did not seek the blessing of Saray, nor did the khan of the Great Horde attempt to grant it. This was the first time since Batu's invasion, 225 years earlier, that a grand prince had not been confirmed in office by Tatar overlords. In 1480, Khan Ahmed of the Great Horde led an army north to reimpose Saray's authority. He found a Muscovite army waiting at the crossing on the Ugra river. Michael Khodarkovsky reconstructs what happened next:

Crossing rivers had always presented a serious logistical challenge to nomadic cavalry even when the foe was not in sight. With the Muscovite troops already positioned at the known fords, such a crossing would have been extremely hazardous. Ahmad chose to wait for the arrival of his ally, King Kazimierz of Poland. But the king's troops never arrived, because they were tied up by the campaign of [Ivan's ally, the Crimean khan] Mengli Giray in the southern regions of Poland-Lithuania.<sup>45</sup>

Ahmed waited three months. But by November the weather was turning and local pastures were exhausted. He may also have heard of Nogai attacks on the Horde's lands, possibly launched with Moscow's encouragement. So he withdrew. His retreat ended the last attempt of a steppe khanate to impose its authority on Moscow. Ever since, the so-called "stand on the Ugra" has been seen as a symbol of Moscow's emancipation from Tatar rule.

Three months later, Ahmed died in battle with the Nogai. But the Great Horde was already in trouble, threatened not just by a rising Muscovy, but also by the Nogai, who were threatened in turn by the Uzbek and Kazakh hordes, and by Crimea to the west. In 1502 Crimean armies destroyed the Great Horde, and the Crimean khanate could now claim to be the legitimate heir of the Golden Horde.

After 1480, Moscow renounced its obligation to pay tributes to the Great Horde, so that the entire tribute, and the elaborate machinery built up to collect it, was from now on used to support the principality of Moscow. Ivan kept paying smaller tributes to other khanates, including Crimea and Kazan', though they looked increasingly like subsidies.<sup>46</sup> Ivan certainly understood the symbolic significance of these changes, for he began styling himself "Tsar" or Caesar. Vasili III reverted to the title of Grand Prince, partly because no other government recognized the new titles, but his successor, Ivan IV, would reassume the title of Tsar at his coronation in 1547.

## BUILDING THE ARMY

How did Muscovy achieve such a powerful position? Sustained territorial expansion depended on the efficient transmutation of land, people, and resources into military power. At Ivan III's accession in 1462, mobilizing an army still meant asking boyars, princes, and other allies to deliver troops. The grand prince had direct control only over his own household forces, and those of his closest boyars, who brought their own followers, their *dvoriane* and *deti boiarskie*. When necessary, princes could also summon a peasant militia.<sup>47</sup> These were unreliable ways of forming armies. There was no guarantee that the required forces would show up or that they would obey the prince's commands if they did appear. Nevertheless, the growing size of the Muscovite elite group and the increasing willingness of neighboring princes to ally with and ingratiate themselves with Moscow's princes ensured that even these crude methods could generate substantial armies.

Under Ivan III and Vasilii III, the size, power, discipline, and organization of the army increased significantly. Territorial expansion provided new lands that could be offered as estates to attract servitors from other principalities, or from Lithuania or the Tatar khanates. By the late fifteenth century, Tatars made up a significant group of servitors. They included for a while the disgruntled brothers of the Crimean khan, Mengli-Giray. Tatars commanded Tsarist troops in battles against Kazan' and the Great Horde, and in 1471 a Tatar Tsarevich Danyar commanded a unit attacking Novgorod.<sup>48</sup> New lands could also be used to pay princes and boyars serving as local governors or *namestniki*. As they submitted to the grand prince, former princes and boyars were fitted into an elaborate system of family precedence, or *mestnichestvo*, that preserved a symbolic sense of family honor and rank even as new arrivals lost their political and military independence.

The most effective way of using new land was to offer it (and the peasants who farmed it) to cavalrymen in return for military service. This was a natural extension of the ancient tradition of *kormlenie*, or "feeding," under which officials were allowed to "feed" off the areas they were administering, as in the following charter from Ivan III.

I, Grand Prince Ivan Vasil'evich of all Russia, have granted to Ivan, son of Andrei Plemiannikov [the villages of] Pushka and Osintsovo as a *kormlenie* with the right to administer justice [*pravda*] [and collect fees for this service] and to collect taxes on the purchase, sale, and branding of horses.<sup>49</sup>

Similar methods were familiar in the steppes, where powerful khans routinely allocated pasturelands in return for military service. Chinggis Khan had done just this at the great *quriltai* of 1206, as had Batu soon after 1240. The system of granting land in return for military service may also have been modeled on the *iqta* of the Islamic world. Ivan's father, Vasilii II, had occasionally rewarded servitors with temporary grants of settled land. But it was Ivan III who turned these ad hoc experiments into the foundations of an increasingly powerful army and state.

In Muscovy, land grants in return for military service came to be known as *pomest'e*. Territorial expansion provided the necessary land.<sup>50</sup> After conquering Novgorod, Ivan III confiscated over a million hectares of land from its nobles and churches, and settled 2,000 Muscovite servitors on these lands in return for military service. The same system was also introduced in Pskov, Riazan', Smolensk, and other newly annexed lands. It was particularly effective at expanding the armies on Moscow's western borders, which helps explain Russia's military successes in this region in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when Moscow conquered Novgorod, Pskov, Smolensk, and Chernigov.<sup>51</sup>

At little cost, the *pomest'e* system increased both the size and discipline of the army.<sup>52</sup> But it also required an expansion of the princely bureaucracy beyond the level of household management. From 1499, government officials began keeping lists of who was liable for service, in an office that would become the formidable *pomestnyi prikaz* after 1550. The Kazan' campaign of 1467, the first military campaign for which we have detailed reports, showed the emergence of a new type of military bureaucracy. The grand prince remained behind the battlefield, taking care of grand strategy, while commanders or *voevody* directed the battle. Preparations for mobilization were careful, and the army set off with a detailed plan of action. The "staff work" for the campaign was meticulous.<sup>53</sup> Such planning would have been impossible without the increased discipline of the *pomest'e* system.

Nevertheless, we should not exaggerate the size of Moscow's armies. In the late fifteenth century, most mobilizations were still small scale. Until 1512, when the government began placing regiments in forts along the Ugra and Oka rivers and their fords, mobilization normally meant creating small armed contingents to defend fortified points along major invasion routes. Despite contemporary claims to the contrary, it is unlikely that Muscovite armies were larger than about 35,000 men before the late sixteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

A second crucial change was technological. In the late fifteenth century, for the first time, gunpowder technologies began to affect warfare in Inner Eurasia. Gunpowder had been used in warfare in China since the tenth century in the rudimentary forms of incendiaries, but when it arrived in Europe, it was already in the more developed form of an explosive to be used in cannon or guns. There is little evidence on the routes by which the technology was transmitted, but it almost certainly arrived through the Mongol Empire, and the first unequivocal illustration of a gunpowder weapon in Europe comes from the 1320s.<sup>55</sup> Muscovite armies first encountered firearms while besieging Bulghar in 1376. These weapons may have come from Central Asia, where Timur began to use them at about this time. Moscow imported cannon, apparently from Bohemia (the words "*pushka*" and "*pishchal*," both referring to light cannon, are of Czech origin), and used them to defend Moscow against Toqtamish in 1382.<sup>56</sup> By the early fifteenth century, both Moscow and Tver' manufactured firearms. But it was under Ivan III that Muscovite armies began to use gunpowder weapons more systematically.<sup>57</sup> Ivan III invited Italian arms makers to Moscow, using connections made through his marriage to Sophia Paleologa (the niece of the last Byzantine emperor), and in 1494 a cannon- and

powder-making factory was established in Moscow. At first cannons were used mainly as fixed defenses or in sieges. Not until the 1520s would they be used in battle.<sup>58</sup> Ivan also hired Italian military architects to rebuild the Kremlin's fortifications as his enemies, too, began to use cannon in sieges.

At first, gunpowder weapons had limited impact, particularly in the steppes. Muskets were inaccurate and slow to load, and cannons were dangerous (if badly made they exploded), and hard to move and aim. In the steppes, cavalry, bows and arrows, and swords retained their advantage much longer than in Europe.<sup>59</sup> The main role of cannon on Muscovy's steppe frontiers was defensive. Steppe armies found it much harder to capture cities with cannon and modern defenses, which ruled out the sort of campaign that Batu had launched. As Khodarkovsky points out, "In 1500 the Crimean troops burned the suburbs of several Polish towns but could not capture them, just as the large Crimean army that reached Moscow in 1571 failed to take the city."<sup>60</sup> Increasingly, steppe armies besieged cities mainly to give themselves a free hand as they captured slaves and livestock from the surrounding countryside.

On Muscovy's steppe frontier, forts and fortification lines became increasingly important, as cannons and modern fortifications improved their defenses, and as Muscovy acquired the wealth necessary to build more forts and longer fortified lines. The main role of forts was "interdiction" – barring the way to steppe raiding parties, whether large or small, and cutting off their lines of retreat. Since Kievan times, princes of Rus' had built fortified lines consisting of earthworks and small forts designed to block familiar invasion routes, particularly at key crossing points across major rivers. By the end of the fifteenth century, there was a long line of fortified points along the Oka river, defended by annual musters of troops. Indeed, under Ivan III and Vasili III, the most expensive military activity may have been the building of frontier fortresses, though much of the cost was passed on to the frontier populations in the form of *corvée* labor.<sup>61</sup> Over the next two centuries, building fortified lines would become the most important single way of advancing the frontier.

A defensive line consisted of fortified towns established in a line at strategic points near river junctions, fording places, or at likely portages. Forts were surrounded with long palisades, trenches, and earthworks. At each fort a garrison of troops was stationed under a military governor (*voevoda*), who held civil authority as well as command of the military. Between strongpoints outposts of various sizes filled in the line. Further out in the steppe areas advanced observation towers served as lookouts to give warning of approaching hostile parties.<sup>62</sup>

## MUSCOVY: A RISING POWER

Increasing mobilizational power paid for Moscow's increasingly powerful armies and fortifications.

As long as Moscow was allied with the Crimea, relative freedom from slave raids stimulated economic growth. Populations grew, and by the mid-sixteenth century three-field rotations were common particularly in the more

populous central regions.<sup>63</sup> The *pomest'e* system probably encouraged agricultural intensification as landlords and government officials increased fiscal pressure on peasants.<sup>64</sup> Peasants, in turn, put pressure on the land, the forests, and rivers.<sup>65</sup> They worked arable land more intensively; they grazed more livestock on meadowlands; they exploited rivers for their fish, and forests for their furs, timber, firewood, honey, and wax. In these ways, mobilizational pressure was transmitted downward through Muscovy's class system to Muscovy's fragile ecological base in the land, the rivers, and the woods. Without abundant surplus land, such pressure would soon have exhausted Muscovy's thin soils, leading to depopulation and eventual decline. This is one more reason why territorial expansion was so crucial to mobilization. With more land, Muscovy's princes could turn the fiscal screws without destroying the principality's fragile ecological foundations.

Territorial expansion grew Muscovy's economy in other ways, too. The conquest of Novgorod gave Moscow access to rich commercial networks linking the Baltic, Lithuania, and Europe to the fur quarries of Siberia and the far north.<sup>66</sup> The conquest of Novgorod also encouraged expansion to the north and north-east. In 1499 Moscow conquered the lands of the Yugrians and Voguls. The following account suggests the methods they used in this early experiment in northern colonization.

In November and December of 1499 three of [Ivan III's] generals, with 5000 men, after building a fortress on the Pechora, crossed the Ural on snow-shoes, in the face of a Siberian winter, and broke with fire and sword upon the Yugrians of the Lower Ob. The native princes, drawn in reindeer sledges, hurried to the invaders' camp to make their submission; the Russian leaders scoured the country in similar equipages, their soldiers following in dogsledges. Forty townships or forts were captured; fifty princes and over 1000 other prisoners were taken; and Ivan's forces, returning to Moscow by the Easter of 1500, reported the entire and final conquest of Yugrians and Voguls.<sup>67</sup>

But profiting from the fur quarries of the north was difficult, because Muscovy still had limited access to the Baltic and Europe. In the late fifteenth century, Muscovy controlled a narrow strip of land near the Neva river (near modern St. Petersburg), which could be reached along the Volkhov river. By the 1480s the value of this route had declined as ships (particularly those of the Dutch) grew too large to navigate the Volkhov. Muscovite merchants now had to trade with Europe through Reval or Narva, whose rulers imposed heavy tolls on Muscovite goods.<sup>68</sup> Gaining a Baltic port that would allow Moscow to increase trade with Europe's booming economy became a central aim of Muscovite military and diplomatic policy for the next two centuries.

To the south, Muscovy took over the entrepreneurial role once played by Saray. Huge trade delegations traveled along the Don or through the steppes to Moscow to exchange horses and other livestock produce for furs and forest goods.<sup>69</sup> In 1486, a Greek employed by the grand prince reported to the duke of Milan that

[certain provinces] give in tribute each year great quantities of sables, ermines, and squirrel skins. Certain others bring cloth and other necessities for the use and maintenance of the court. Even the meats, honey, beer, fodder, and hay used by the Lord and others of the court are brought by communities and provinces according to certain quantities imposed by ordinance ...<sup>70</sup>

The importance of these southern trade networks helps explain why Muscovy and Lithuania competed so fiercely to control trade routes through Ukraine along the Dnieper.

The *pomest'e* system played an increasingly important mobilizational role from the late fifteenth century. If it was to work, peasants had to supply servitors with food, horses, cash, and recruits, so that mid-level servitors could build their own petty mobilizational machines. They could only do so if the government helped them bind peasants to the land, making it difficult to flee even the most predatory of landlords. As early as 1497, in the first law code to apply to the whole of Muscovy, peasants were forbidden to leave their lands before paying all outstanding dues and loans. Even then, they were only allowed to leave around St. George's Day (November 26), just after the harvest.

Elite demands on the rural population took many forms.

In one contract with the monastery on whose manor they lived, the peasants undertook to perform a wide variety of services, including cultivating the monks' fields, mowing their hay, repairing their fences, building their weirs, weaving their fishing-nets and baking their bread. Under other arrangements, peasants gave their lords specified amounts of rye and oats, butter, cheese, flax and a small amount of money. By the end of the fifteenth century, such cash payments often formed part of the peasants' dues.<sup>71</sup>

Expansion and fiscal and bureaucratic reforms allowed the princes of Moscow to mobilize cash as well as men and resources. Immunity grants list judicial fees that had been levied by princes since the Middle Ages, duties on trade, levied at the entrances to towns or at transit points such as river crossings, and many forms of labor service to support local officials or to build and maintain roads or fortifications.<sup>72</sup> But cash revenues had limited importance before the middle of the sixteenth century, and the *pomest'e* system covered many of the costs of forming and equipping Muscovy's armies.

Moscow city was transformed. Fourteenth-century Moscow had a population of less than 20,000 people. I. E. Zabelin remarked that it resembled a "gentleman's country estate."<sup>73</sup> The most important building was the prince's fortress, the Kremlin, where the prince lived with his family and leading nobles, churchmen, officials, and merchants. The rest of the town extended little more than a kilometer or two from the Kremlin. Then you reached forest lands with small villages of just a few households.<sup>74</sup> In the fifteenth century, the city grew fast. In the early sixteenth century, Moscow may have been bigger than London. According to Alef, its size owed less to its commercial than to its political and ecclesiastical importance, and the desire of princes and bishops and merchants to build impressive palaces and churches. Ivan III renovated the Kremlin and the city, with the help of Italian architects.<sup>75</sup>



The speed of Moscow's rise to power is a reminder that, under Inner Eurasian conditions, slight advantages accrued to the most powerful states in powerful positive feedback cycles. Wealth attracted servitors, who served in Muscovy's growing armies, which conquered new lands and generated even more wealth. None of this could work without luck, skillful leadership, and a high degree of elite solidarity. But elite discipline was a brittle resource. It had to be nurtured and maintained with care and skill because splits at the top could easily crack the entire system apart. The critical role of leadership in lands with limited surpluses surely helps explain the emergence and persistence of Muscovy's increasingly autocratic political culture.

Through loyal service to its Mongol overlords, careful husbanding of their human and territorial resources, a willingness to learn from their Mongol overlords, and a large dose of luck, the princes of Moscow had managed to create a principality far larger, more unified, and more powerful than any other in the former lands of Rus'. To a remarkable degree they had met the daunting challenge of building and managing an agrarian *smychka* that would allow them to defend their agrarian lands against the military power of their steppe neighbors. By 1500 Muscovy was a major international power. In the next century, it would build on that power. But it would also come close to collapse before achieving in the seventeenth century a hegemony over much of western and central Inner Eurasia.

## NOTES

- 1 Keenan, "Muscovy and Kazan," 554.
- 2 See the account in Ostrowski, "Ruling Class Structures."
- 3 Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 4; and see Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 6ff. on the Crimean khanate.
- 4 On the Mongol impact, see Lindner, "How Mongol Were the Early Ottomans?"
- 5 Lieven, *Empire*, 130–131; Ch. 4, on the Ottoman Empire, offers many suggestive comparisons with the Russian Empire.
- 6 Ágoston, "Ottoman Warfare," 121–126.
- 7 Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, 51; Mindaugas converted to Catholicism for c.10 years in 1251, which explains why a representative of the pope crowned him king in 1253.
- 8 Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, 59.
- 9 Cited in Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 70.
- 10 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 2.
- 11 Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 39.
- 12 Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, 76–79; on tribute, see 112–113; Fennell, *Russian Church*, 133.
- 13 Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 55.
- 14 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 242; Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 44.
- 15 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 239–241.
- 16 Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 53–54.
- 17 A good, if quirky introduction to this world is Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways."

- 18 Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 608.
- 19 The extent of this borrowing has been the subject of a long-running debate between Donald Ostrowski, author of *Muscovy and the Mongols*, and Charles J. Halperin, author of *Russia and the Golden Horde* and *The Tatar Yoke*.
- 20 Crummey, *Formation of Muscovy*, 34; see also the description in Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*, 25–26.
- 21 Such as those in the Novgorodian chronicle; Hellie, “Russia, 1200–1815,” 483.
- 22 Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 244–245, offers a good summary; the fundamental work is Smith, *Peasant Farming in Muscovy*.
- 23 Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 72–90; and see Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness*.
- 24 Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 80.
- 25 For an overview of early Muscovite strategies of military mobilization, see Ostrowski, “Troop Mobilization.”
- 26 These comments are based on Childs, “The Military Revolution 1,” 19.
- 27 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 151.
- 28 Crummey, *Formation of Muscovy*, 22; on the history of Novgorod, see Birnbaum, *Lord Novgorod the Great*.
- 29 Estimate of population density from Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*, 13.
- 30 Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke*, 81.
- 31 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 193–194.
- 32 Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 55; on this critical episode, see Fennell, “The Tver Uprising of 1327”; and the discussion in Kivelson, “Merciful Father, Impersonal State,” 198.
- 33 Nasonov, *Mongoly i Rus’*, 110.
- 34 Roublev, “The Mongol Tribute,” 49.
- 35 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 251–252.
- 36 Fennell, *Russian Church*, 136; on Peter’s political role, see 135–136.
- 37 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 248–250.
- 38 Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 65.
- 39 Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 39–40; see also Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*.
- 40 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 220.
- 41 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 145.
- 42 Martin, “The emergence of Moscow,” 178.
- 43 Alef, “Origins,” 52.
- 44 Fennell, *Russian Church*, 129.
- 45 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 80.
- 46 Ostrowski, “Growth of Muscovy,” 235.
- 47 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 145.
- 48 Ostrowski, “Simeon Bekbulatovich,” 27.
- 49 Cited from Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 1: 120.
- 50 Hellie, “Russia, 1200–1815,” 484–485.
- 51 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 151.
- 52 Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*, 5.
- 53 Alekseev, *Gosudar’ Vseya Rusi*, 68–70; but Davies doubts that such a bureaucracy existed before the mid-sixteenth century; see Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 148–160.
- 54 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 148.
- 55 Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*, partic. Chs. 2–6.
- 56 Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 365–366.
- 57 The impact of the gunpowder revolution in Russia is described superbly in Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*.

- 58 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 151.  
 59 Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*, 1; Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 150.  
 60 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 19.  
 61 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 150.  
 62 Donnelly, “The Russian Conquest,” 193.  
 63 The spread of three-field rotations is described in Smith, *Peasant Farming in Muscovy*.  
 64 Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 245; and see Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 301.  
 65 Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 251–254, is good on the many different resources that supplemented arable farming.  
 66 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 312.  
 67 Beazley, “Russian Expansion,” 7.  
 68 Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow*, 25–34.  
 69 Ostrowski, “Growth of Muscovy,” 218, 226–227.  
 70 Ostrowski, “Growth of Muscovy,” 227.  
 71 Crummey, *Formation of Muscovy*, 7.  
 72 Hellie, “Russia, 1200–1815,” 487.  
 73 Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 32.  
 74 Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 32–33.  
 75 Alef, “Origins,” 62–65.

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## [5] *1500–1600: PASTORALIST AND OASIS SOCIETIES OF INNER EURASIA*

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### *THE FIRST GLOBAL WORLD SYSTEM*

After 1500, the world was transformed as European mariners, soldiers, and merchants began to weave together the first global exchange networks.<sup>1</sup> For the first time in human history, societies in the Americas and Afro-Eurasia, and eventually in Australasia and the Pacific, began to exchange people, knowledge, religions, and trade goods, as well as crops, domesticated animals, and diseases. The “Columbian Exchange,” as A. W. Crosby described these global transfers, created a level of global connectedness not seen since the world’s major landmasses had been united within Pangaea, 200 million years ago.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, American maize was flourishing in regions of China unsuited to rice, American tobacco was being smoked in lounge rooms and hostleries in Europe, and sheep, cattle, and horses were running wild in parts of the Americas that had never known such beasts. Diseases traveled too, with disastrous results for the least disease-experienced regions, including the major civilizations of the Americas, which suffered a demographic, social, and political collapse worse than the Black Death. Like all pulses of globalization, this one destroyed as much as it created.

The first global networks would also transform knowledge. This transformation began in Europe, as a tsunami of new information and ideas struck its ports and cities, its academies and seminaries. New technologies, from printing to gunpowder, spread faster than ever before, along with new ideas about God and the cosmos, and human, social, cultural, and religious diversity, to jump start what would later be called the “Scientific Revolution.” Global networks energized commerce by offering new commodities and spectacular opportunities for arbitrage profits. Russian fur traders competed in European markets with fur traders from the Americas. The slave trade was globalized as trans-Atlantic exchanges began to rival the older slaving networks of Inner Eurasia and the Mediterranean world. By the second half of the sixteenth century, slave

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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labor was being used to extract American silver cheaply from the mines of Mexico and Potosi, from where, transformed into Mexican *pesos*, silver traveled to Europe, where Dutch merchants and German bankers used it to pay for trade with China, whose growing populations and flourishing commercial networks demanded ever more silver for coinage and could pay high prices for it. When combined with the silver transported across the Pacific in the Manila galleons, these networks transferred to China about 75 percent of all the silver produced between 1500 and 1800.<sup>3</sup> Such exchanges synergized commercial, cultural, and technological transfers throughout the world. They also yielded astonishing profits that helped fund European imperial projects from Chile to Japan.

No wonder world historians have treated the sixteenth century as a fundamental turning point in human history. As Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, “World trade and the world market date from the sixteenth century, and from then on the modern history of Capital starts to unfold.”

Though the first pulse of globalization was carried mainly through the world’s sea lanes, its reverberations would be felt even in land-locked Inner Eurasia. Here, two types of impact were particularly significant. First, trade networks expanded in scale and were increasingly reoriented towards Europe, whose merchants dominated the first global networks. Second, accelerating cultural exchanges speeded the transfer and adoption of new technologies such as printing and gunpowder weapons.

Formerly at the margins of Eurasia’s major exchange networks, Europe now found itself at the center of the world’s first global networks. This revolution in the global topology of wealth and power particularly affected those parts of Inner Eurasia closest to Europe, including Muscovy. Increasing European and Mediterranean demand for grain, timber, and furs stimulated agrarian production in Poland, the hunt for furs in northern Russia, and the demand for Inner Eurasian slaves.<sup>4</sup> Europe’s expanding markets drove the rulers of Moscow to seek easier and cheaper outlets to the West because the land trade through Poland was expensive; trade through Reval (Tallinn since 1918) incurred heavy tolls; and the trade through Archangel, which began in the 1550s, exacted high transportation costs.<sup>5</sup> But Muscovite rulers also tried to protect themselves from some of the more corrosive ideas and technologies emerging in Europe, from Protestantism to printing. Church leaders resisted European religious influences, and as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, foreigners in Moscow were forced to live apart from Russians in a special *nemetskaia sloboda*, or “German quarter.”<sup>6</sup>

Though gunpowder was invented in Song China, gunpowder weaponry advanced most rapidly in Europe’s brutally competitive state system, during what Michael Roberts called the “Military Revolution.”<sup>7</sup> Ship-borne cannons helped Europeans force their way into the rich trading networks of the Indian Ocean, where they built new maritime empires, while the growing cost of gunpowder armies drove the search for new ways of mobilizing wealth and improved technologies. From the mid-fifteenth century, French armies started using cast bronze barrels instead of welded and bound iron guns, which often blew apart when fired. Cannon increased the cost of sieges for both attackers and defenders. As fortifications improved, military engineers had to design and

build larger, more powerful, and more expensive cannons to breach thicker and better designed walls.

The first references to handguns are to mid-fourteenth-century harquebuses. Matchlock muskets appeared early in the sixteenth century. But even in the early sixteenth century, harquebusiers and musketeers were usually less effective than archers: “a well-trained archer could discharge ten arrows a minute, with reasonable accuracy up to 200 metres, but the arquebus of the earlier sixteenth century took several minutes to reload and was accurate only up to 100 metres.”<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, harquebusiers were cheaper and easier to mobilize. They needed just a few days’ training (until used in large formations when they needed to be drilled), while archers and cavalry acquired their skills over many years. So, as a general rule, infantry armies equipped with handguns were cheaper, soldier for soldier, than cavalry armies, and easier to manage and drill. But competition ensured that infantry armies would be mobilized more permanently, and would grow in size and cost, so the long-term result of the Military Revolution was to increase the financial and administrative costs of warfare. Gunpowder warfare favored the largest and wealthiest states.

In Inner Eurasia, distance and the mobility of pastoralist armies slowed the introduction of gunpowder weapons. But by the early sixteenth century, they could no longer be ignored, particularly along Muscovy’s western borderlands. Muscovite armies incorporated units of musketeers from early in the sixteenth century, and fort building intensified along Muscovy’s steppe borders as cannon proved their effectiveness against nomadic cavalry.<sup>9</sup>

All in all, globalization and gunpowder increased both the possibilities for mobilization and its urgency. In the long run that benefited the agrarian societies of northwestern Inner Eurasia whose prospects for long-term growth were greater than those of the pastoralist world, or the geographically bound oasis polities of Central Asia.

This chapter will describe the history of societies in Mongolia, in central Inner Eurasia, and in the Pontic steppes in the sixteenth century. These regions were relatively insulated from the larger changes that were transforming other parts of the world. But they were increasingly influenced by material and cultural transfers from agrarian regions such as Europe and China, and eventually those transfers would bring even the remotest parts of Inner Eurasia into a new, globalized world system. The next chapter will describe the sixteenth-century history of Muscovy, a region that was closer to Europe and affected more immediately by the global changes of the sixteenth century.

## *MONGOLIA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY*

In sixteenth-century Mongolia, political and military power shifted from the Oirat tribes of the west to the Khalkha tribes of central and eastern Mongolia. There is no obvious large-scale reason for the shift, so it may simply reflect the skills of particular leaders.

At the end of the fifteenth century, the most powerful leader of the Khalkha Mongols was a Chinggisid, Dayan Khan (b. 1475?, r. 1480?–1517?).<sup>10</sup> In 1480,



while still a child, he was proclaimed heir to the Yuan dynasty. By the early 1500s, after sending several unsuccessful tribute missions to the Ming, he began launching raids into north China. In 1510 Dayan Khan became overall leader of the Khalkha tribes. He now ruled in his own right, and launched new raids into north China, with armies of up to 70,000 soldiers. By his death in 1517, he had crushed the Oirat and united most Mongol tribes for the first time in a century.<sup>11</sup>

The most successful of Dayan Khan's successors was his grandson, Altan ("Golden") Khan (1508–1582). As the second son of his father, he could not inherit the title of Khagan, but did become the leader of the Tumed Mongols, based near modern Hohhot, the city Altan Khan founded in Inner Mongolia. Like his father, Altan Khan worked hard to find the right balance of trading and raiding along the Chinese borders. In 1541, after many years of raiding, which prompted the Ming to start building the modern forms of the Great Wall, Altan Khan tried to negotiate a reopening of border markets. His envoy was hacked to pieces. Not until the 1550s would Mongol raids force the Ming to reopen border markets. But they opened them with extreme reluctance. Officials argued that in the long run border trade would prove more costly than military defense, and that granting the right to trade was tantamount to a humiliating military defeat.<sup>12</sup> Others feared that a peaceful policy would reduce military vigilance and allow covert raiding. In 1551, a Chinese official wrote:

These dogs and sheep are untrustworthy and constantly changing. Now, when we send an important minister to carry gold and silk to the border, they may not abide by the agreement and may refuse to come. Or, because of the markets they may attack the customs area and invade. Or, they may come to the market to trade today but to invade tomorrow. Or, they may send their masses to invade and say that it was done by other tribes. Or, they may bring weak horses but ask for a high price. Or, because they sell horses, they may ask for excessive rewards.

Yet the alternative to border trade seemed to be prolonged and expensive frontier wars. In 1550, Altan Khan's armies demonstrated the costs of a purely military strategy by attacking Beijing itself. By the late 1550s even the Oirat tribes had accepted Altan Khan's suzerainty, having become his marriage allies or *quda*. He also established relations with the Chinggisid rulers of Turfan and Hami, the gateways to the Silk Roads.

In 1571, the Ming government finally reopened border markets. But they insisted on detailed ground rules, devised by an official called Ch'ung-ku, whose biographer described how the system worked.

[Wang] Ch'ung-ku then broadly summoned [Chinese] merchants and traders to trade cotton, cloth, and cereal for fur and hide. [They came] from far away ... and gathered under the fortresses along the border. [The officials] collected tax from them to meet the need for bestowals and rewards. The government provided gold and cloth to the greater and lesser tribal heads who yearly traded horses of a definite quota. [Wang] Ch'ung-ku usually appeared at Hung-ssu pu each year to publicize the magnificence and mercy [of the Court]. All the tribal [people] bowed before [him] and no one dared to quarrel.<sup>13</sup>

Altan Khan explained why the trade was so crucial to the Mongols in a petition to the Chinese court in 1571 that highlights growing Mongolian dependence on Chinese products:

We, your vassals, have suffered an increase of population and a shortage of clothing ... and on none of the borders were markets permitted to open. There was no way to satisfy our needs for clothing. Our felts and furs wear poorly in the summer heat, but it has been impossible to get even a piece of cloth.<sup>14</sup>

Such comments illustrate the difficulties that population growth and an increasing taste for luxury goods could create in flourishing pastoral nomadic societies.

We have some idea of what border markets were like from a description of Shirokalga [Kalgan, called Zhangjiakou, since 1949] by Ivan Petlin, one of the first Russian envoys to China. He visited in 1619. Having traveled through a gate in the wall, he entered the town, which was built of stone, surrounded by high walls fortified with cannon, and full of shops.

In the market places there are stone shops painted various colors and decorated with dried grasses. There are all manner of goods in these shops; in addition to woollen fabrics there are velvets and silks embroidered with gold and many silks in all colors. But there are no precious stones. They do have all kinds of garden produce such as various kinds of sugar, cloves, cinnamon, anise, apples, muskmelons, watermelons, cucumbers, onions, garlic radishes, carrots, cabbage, poppyseed, turnips, nutmeg, violets, almonds, ginger, rhubarb, and many other vegetables about which we know nothing at all, not even their names. They have eating places and taverns. The taverns serve all kinds of things to drink, and there are many drunkards and prostitutes. There are stone prisons along the streets. A person is hanged for theft; for brigandry the punishment is impalement and decapitation; for forgery, the hands are cut off.<sup>15</sup>

After the 1571 agreement, Altan Khan tried hard to police his side of the border, but after encouraging raids for many years, it was not easy to rein in his followers. In 1580, followers of his son captured large numbers of people and animals in Kansu. The emperor closed the Kansu markets, and opened them only after Altan Khan forced the return of all captured booty. There followed a further period of peace along the borders policed by Altan Khan, and populations increased in border regions as did the amount of cultivated land.

As in the time of the Türk and Uighur empires, peace and trade encouraged the Sinicization of Mongol nobles. The change was particularly evident in the new Mongol city of Kokhe-Khota, modern Hohehot, the capital of Inner Mongolia. The town was founded by Altan Khan, who built a lamasery here in the 1550s. It was one of the first large towns to appear in Mongolia since the thirteenth century. From this period, large numbers of Chinese farmers migrated into Inner Mongolia south of the Gobi, just as Russian peasants would eventually migrate into the Pontic steppes. Mongol leaders in the region began to rely on them for supplies of grain.<sup>16</sup>

For a decade, it looked as if Altan Khan might build a relatively stable version of the *smychka* based on trade, but backed up with the always credible threat of Mongol raids. This was similar to the tribute relationship established by the Xiongnu almost 2,000 years earlier, and described by Thomas Barfield as the “Outer Frontier Strategy.”<sup>17</sup> But the system broke apart after Altan Khan’s death in 1582, partly because Altan Khan’s power depended more on his personal skills than on his rank. He remained merely Khan of the Tumed so his heirs lacked legitimacy beyond their own tribes. He also failed to monopolize control over the trade and tributary relationship with China. Much border trade escaped his control, allowing regional princes to establish their own trading and tributary relationships with northern China.<sup>18</sup> In short, Altan Khan failed to build a unified, disciplined, Mongolian-wide elite loyal to himself and his family. After his death, even the semblance of unity vanished. Three distinct Khalkha khanates appeared, as well as the Chakhar khanate, which was in the true Chinggisid line.

While mobilizing the wealth of north China proved extremely difficult, mobilizing its cultural resources was much easier, and sometimes those resources could help brace structures of power and authority in the steppes. This helps explain another important aspect of Altan Khan’s rule: his adoption of Buddhism. This was a decision with immense consequence for Mongolia’s future.

There were many precedents for Altan Khan’s decision to adopt Buddhism. In the first millennium CE, both the Khazar and Uighur empires had adopted organized religions from Outer Eurasia, respectively Judaism and Manichaeism. In both societies, institutionalized religions were introduced from above, and, despite clashing with many elements of traditional steppeland religions, they eventually put down deep roots and incorporated older steppeland religious traditions. In any case, Buddhism was not entirely alien to Mongolia. Khagan Ogodei built a Buddhist stupa in Karakorum. Qubilai kept Tibetan Buddhist monks at his court.<sup>19</sup> Under the Yuan dynasty, many Buddhist scriptures were translated into Mongolian, and after the collapse of the Yuan dynasty Mongol nobles brought Buddhist traditions with them on their return to Mongolia. However, Buddhism declined after the expulsion from China, as it slowly dissolved within traditional religious practices and beliefs.<sup>20</sup> Walther Heissig argued that by the sixteenth century, its influence had disappeared almost entirely, though this may be an exaggeration.<sup>21</sup> Forms of Buddhism almost certainly survived, though mingled with traditional shamanic practices.

Altan Khan initiated what is often described as a “second conversion” to Buddhism. He was converted in 1573, during the peaceful final years of his reign, by two captured lamas of the Yellow Hat (*dGe-lugs-pa*) or reformed faith, founded by Tsong Kapa (1357–1419).<sup>22</sup> Altan Khan’s conversion may have been sincere, but political calculations surely played a role too, because the localized and individualistic practices of shamanic traditions could not provide the broad institutional bracing offered by Outer Eurasia’s institutionalized religions.<sup>23</sup>

In 1576, in Tibet, Altan Khan conferred the title of (third) Dalai Lama on bSod-nams rGya-mtsho, the leading Lama of the Tibetan Yellow Hat Sect.

This event marks the real beginning of Mongolia’s “second conversion” to Buddhism. The Dalai Lama reciprocated by proclaiming Altan Khan a Bodhisatva and the reincarnation of Qubilai Khan. This, perhaps, was what Altan Khan had really been looking for. Within Buddhist tradition he could now be described as a Chinggisid. When the Dalai Lama died, it was found, conveniently, that he had been reincarnated in a great-grandson of Altan Khan.<sup>24</sup> Such close relations between Mongol and Buddhist leaders would become common, in part because Yellow Hat Buddhism was as politically and commercially activist as the Naqshbandiyya Sufism of Central Asia. Altan Khan made lamas equal in status to nobles, creating a new social class in Mongolia that would acquire immense political, ideological, and economic influence.<sup>25</sup>

After Altan Khan’s death in 1582, rival khans in different parts of Mongolia converted to Buddhism, built monasteries, and supported the translation of Tibetan scriptures.<sup>26</sup> In 1585, Abatai Khan built the great lamasery of Erdeni Zuu, in Karakorum. Perhaps because of Karakorum’s close association with the Mongol Empire, Erdeni Zuu would soon become one of the most sacred places of Mongolian Buddhism (Figure 5.1). At first, Mongolian Buddhist leaders tried to resist contamination from traditional steppe religion by burning shamanic effigies or *ongghons*, or by demonstrating their claims to superior medical knowledge. The Torgut lama, Neichi Toyin (1577–1653), managed more than once to cure powerful leaders, after which most of their followers converted to Buddhism.<sup>27</sup> In 1577, Altan Khan banned the killing



**Figure 5.1** Erdeni Zuu Monastery today. Bouette, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erdene\\_Zuu\\_Monastery#/media/File:Monast%C3%A8re\\_d%27Erdene\\_Zuu\\_2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erdene_Zuu_Monastery#/media/File:Monast%C3%A8re_d%27Erdene_Zuu_2.jpg). Used under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

of women or slaves or animals as sacrificial gifts, as well as the possession of *ongghons*.<sup>28</sup>

Lamaist Buddhism soon wove its way deep into the social, political, and cultural fabric of Mongolian life. Traditional gods entered the Buddhist pantheon, becoming ancestor spirits, or minor deities or demons. As early as 1594, a Chinese writer claimed that Mongolia was undergoing a profound cultural transformation, which he saw as the result of beneficial Chinese influences:

The customs of the barbarians used to be savage and cruel, and for a long time it was impossible to civilize them. But since they submitted and began to pay tribute [a reference to the trade agreement of 1571], they have conceived a great regard for the Buddhist faith. Within their tents they constantly adore an image of the Buddha, and they make him an offering whenever they eat or drink. The rich ... invite the lamas to recite prayers, offer incense, and bow reverently. All the money they can get goes for casting statuettes of the Buddha or stupas. Men and women, old and young, always have a rosary in their hands. Some of them make a little box of silver or gold, about two or three inches in height, into which they put amulets. They carry this box beneath the left arm, and are never without it, either sitting or lying, sleeping or eating.<sup>29</sup>

Altan Khan's religious policies suggest, as do his complex negotiations with China, that he understood well the difficulties of recreating a unified Mongolian polity that could mobilize the wealth of north China, particularly for a non-Chinggisid ruler such as himself. Managing cultural transfers from neighboring regions was easier, and Buddhism offered Mongolian leaders new forms of legitimation. However, increasing reliance on institutionalized religion was also a sign of political, military, and economic weakness, of the limited possibilities for ecological mobilization in the steppes, and the growing difficulty of exacting large tribute payments from an increasingly populous, wealthy, and powerful China.

## *THE KAZAKH STEPPES*

Even further away from major agrarian civilizations, pastoral nomadic elites in the Kazakh steppes found it even harder to mobilize agrarian resources on a large scale. But they, too, were influenced by the cultural traditions of nearby agrarian regions. However, while most khans identified themselves as Muslims, and were regarded as Muslims by others, in practice only those who lived for long periods in cities had any formal understanding of Islam. Reverence for Allah as the one god, some familiarity with Muslim stories of Muhammad and Allah, which filtered into folk literature, and some influence from sharia law on traditional law – this was the extent of Islamic influence in the Kazakh steppes for several centuries. Even in the eighteenth century, there were no mosques or madrasas in the steppe, and most steppe nomads encountered Islamic ideas and practices only through traveling Sufi. Popular religious practices remained shamanic. In the nineteenth century, the Kazakh ethnographer

Chokan Valikhanov wrote that Kazakh religious traditions had barely changed since the time of Timur.<sup>30</sup>

In the old heartlands of the Golden Horde, south of the Urals, there lived several pastoralist groups, including the Nogai. Here, political fragmentation deprived leaders of any chance to extort sustained tributes, so they relied largely on casual raiding to exact tributes and slaves from sedentary regions. These were simple, crude, and volatile forms of the *smychka*. Political alliances shifted with bewildering speed as ambitious local leaders cut deals with nomadic and sedentary neighbors, often creating systems that lasted no longer than the leaders who had created them.<sup>31</sup>

Further east, in the Kazakh steppes, at a safer distance from the rising powers of Muscovy and Crimea, there appeared several large and reasonably durable pastoral confederations. For much of the sixteenth century, under Khans Buyunduk (r. 1480–1511) and Kasim (r. 1509–1523), and again under Khan Haqq-Nazar (r. 1538–1580), Kazakh leaders claimed hegemony over the entire Kazakh steppe, including all the lands of Orda and Shiban, the former White and Blue Hordes. Like their predecessors, the Kazakhs maintained winter camps along the Syr Darya and traded with the region's major cities. As long as the Oirats (to the east) and the Nogai (to the west) remained relatively weak, the Kazakh could dominate the central steppes. Kasim may have tried to establish a durable general law code for the Kazakhs, modeled perhaps on the Mongolian "yasa," and influenced in some degree by sharia law, but it has not survived.<sup>32</sup>

After Kasim's death, in 1523, the Kazakh confederation split into three "hordes" (literally "hundreds" or "*zhüz*"). The Great (or Senior) Horde remained in the Semirechie, migrating along the Chu, Talas, and Ili rivers, and exacting tributes from the region's many small agrarian settlements and trading towns. The Middle Horde migrated in central Kazakhstan from the Aral Sea and the Syr Darya as far north as Omsk in southern Siberia, and as far east as the Altai. Its members traded with and sometimes extorted resources from the cities of the Syr Darya. The Small (Junior) Horde migrated from the lower Syr Darya to the Yaik (Ural) river in the lands once known as the Uzbek steppes. The three Kazakh hordes retained a sense of Kazakh unity, and reunified briefly under Kasim's son, Haqq-Nazar, and again during the reign of Taulkel Khan (r. 1586–1598), the last ruler of a united Kazakh federation.<sup>33</sup> But unity was fragile, partly because the khans had limited power over their followers, except during major wars.

Kazakh khans were elected from Jochid lineages. They ruled loose coalitions whose leaders presided over clans headed by sultans or *bey*s. The Kazakh aristocracy included those who could claim Chinggisid descent and were therefore known as "white bone," as opposed to the majority of "black bones." Khans were elected at meetings of the *bey*s. Similar meetings were held each year to decide on the annual migrations for each clan and *aul*.<sup>34</sup> Clans were divided into family groups, or *auls*, each consisting of 30–40 yurts and each headed by its own elder, or *aksakal* (white beard).<sup>35</sup> Locally, power was exercised by clan elders who determined the pasturelands that could be used by each *aul* or family. *Aksakals* also had the right to mobilize soldiers and levy taxes on

the herds of each family and to administer customary law (*adat*). Local *beys* administered justice, generally by requiring payback or blood-price from those accused of crimes.

In a region with limited agrarian resources, these relatively democratic structures made it difficult to build mobilizational systems large and disciplined enough to mobilize significant resources from neighboring agrarian regions. Khans had no automatic right to levy troops, but had to negotiate with local sultans or *beys* to form armies for particular campaigns. They could levy taxes only for special occasions, such as wars.<sup>36</sup> The khans continued to nomadize, like the rest of the population, if in slightly higher style. Like their *beys*, they lived in white rather than black felt tents.

The difficulty of mobilizing large flows of tribute from the Kazakh steppes also reflected the ancient balance of power between cities and steppes in Central Asia. Taxing trade caravans traveling through the steppes could be lucrative, which is why, in the late sixteenth century, Khan Haqq-Nazar (r. c.1538–1580) established friendly relations with Muscovy, the destination of many steppe caravans. But commercial revenues were not enough to build a powerful mobilizational system, and Kazakh leaders were generally too weak to mobilize enough power to exact more than the occasional tribute from nearby lands.

Demographic and economic growth might have increased the opportunities for empire building. But there was not much room for growth in the steppes. Pastoral nomadic societies were extensive by their very nature and had long since achieved levels of ecological efficiency that left little room for intensification. It is possible, as we have seen, that the Little Ice Age increased rainfall in the steppes, stimulating growth in both livestock and human populations, but if so, there is no sign that population growth translated automatically into increased military power. Rather, as in Mongolia, it may have intensified conflicts over scarce pastures. So the challenges faced by Haqq-Nazar were really little different from those faced by Qaidu or Timur. Success meant mobilizing resources from the oases of Transoxiana, or the cities of Khorasan and northern Afghanistan. And, with the Uzbek entrenched in Transoxiana, doing that seemed just beyond the reach of the Kazakh khans.

## *OASIS POLITIES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND THE TARIM BASIN*

In the more urbanized regions of Transoxiana and the Tarim basin, we see the other half of the *smychka*. Here, there was plenty of agricultural and commercial wealth, but the geography of irrigation oases limited possibilities for military mobilization. This created a highly unstable balance of power with nomadic neighbors, whose tribes were also fragmented by the region's geography (particularly in Transoxiana), or settled in pasturelands far from the major cities (particularly in northern Moghulistan). This prolonged stasis, imposed by Central Asia's geography and ecology, made it difficult to build powerful

mobilization systems based either in the steppes of Transoxiana, or in its farming oases.

From 1500, the Uzbeks had established themselves as rulers of Transoxiana under Abul-Khayr's grandson, Muhammad Shibani Khan (r. 1496–1510). The Jochid line of Chinggisids now controlled Transoxiana, while rulers of Chagatayid descent ruled in Moghulistan in eastern Central Asia.<sup>37</sup> As Adeeb Khalid reminds us, it is important to think of groups such as the Uzbek not as nations but rather as dynasties; the idea of an Uzbek or Kazakh nation is really a creation of the Soviet period.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1501 and 1507, when he was defeated and killed by the Safawid Shah Ismail near Merv, Muhammad Shibani conquered most of the major Transoxianian cities. His successors, Köchkunju (r. 1512–1531) and Ubaydullah (1533–1539), consolidated Shibaniid control of Transoxiana and the well-watered and densely populated Ferghana valley, ruling from the twin capitals of Bukhara and Samarkand. In Khorezm, another Shibaniid dynasty, the Yadi-garid, established themselves as regional khans in 1515, renewing Khorezm's ancient traditions of independence. Khorezm would retain a degree of independence until the creation of a Russian protectorate in 1873, though its capital shifted from Urgench to Khiva after the Amu Darya river changed its course in the sixteenth century.

Shibaniid dynasties dominated sedentary Central Asia for most of the sixteenth century. However, they failed to build a durable *smychka* between the region's cities and steppelands. Though each khan controlled a central region around a capital city (Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, and Balkh all played this role under different rulers), beyond the core regions, khans ruled through complex alliances of cities and tribes that had to be constantly renegotiated.<sup>39</sup> These difficulties help explain the growing importance of religious legitimation in Central Asia and Moghulistan, and the increasing power of Sufi organizations.

After Ubaydullah's death in 1539, there followed 40 years of conflict before another powerful leader, Abdullah II (1583–1598), recreated a unified Uzbek polity, and undertook reforms of its irrigation systems and monetary system. The English traveler Anthony Jenkinson described Bukhara after visiting it in 1558.

This Bokhara is situated in the lowest part of all the land, walled about with a high wall of earth, with divers gates into the same: it is divided into 3 partitions, whereof two parts are the king's, and the third part is for merchants and markets, and every science hath their dwelling and market by themselves. The city is very great, and the houses for the most part of earth, but there are also many houses, temples and monuments of stone sumptuously builded, and gilt, and specially bath stoves so artificially built, that the like thereof is not in the world. There is a little river running through the middle of the said city, but the water thereof is most unwholesome.<sup>40</sup>

Jenkinson reported that merchants came to Bukhara from India, Persia, Russia, and China. Indian and Persian traders brought cotton, woolen and linen cloths,



and took back silks, hides, slaves, and horses. Chinese goods included musk, rhubarb, and satin, and traders from Russia brought hides, sheepskins, woolen cloth, bridles, and saddles, purchasing in return cotton and silks.<sup>41</sup> Curiously, Jenkinson himself, though English, counts as the first person to make formal diplomatic contacts between Muscovy and Central Asia, because he brought a message from Tsar Ivan IV. Jenkinson was also the first to raise the issue of Russian slaves in Central Asia, which would loom large in future negotiations between Muscovy/Russia and Central Asia.<sup>42</sup>

Abdullah's death in 1598 (the same year in which the Muscovite Rurikid dynasty ended) marked the end of Shibanid power over Transoxiana. Apart from a brief period of unity within the Persian Empire of Nadir Shah (1740–1747), Transoxiana would not be united again until the Russian conquests of the late nineteenth century. The Tashkent region drifted into the control of the Kazakhs, while Bukhara fell to another Jochid dynasty, the Ashtarkhanids or Janids (1599–1785), who were descended from the khans of Astrakhan.

There was much continuity between Shibanid rule and that of the Timurid era. Both dynasties were of Turkic pastoralist origin, and both displayed the key features of the *smychka*, with a military wing dominated by Turkic tribal leaders and an administrative and urban wing dominated by the (often Persian-speaking) towns.<sup>43</sup> Under both the later Timurids and the Shibanids, the military wing of the *smychka* declined in importance after the initial conquests, as increasing numbers of pastoralists settled in the region's villages and towns, and as Uzbek leaders settled into the cultural and commercial world of the cities. It was probably in the sixteenth century, under the Shibanids, that Turkic speakers began to dominate the urban regions of Transoxiana as well as its steppelands.<sup>44</sup>

We have no evidence of sustained population growth in Transoxiana, and evidence on commercial growth is ambiguous. Increasing sea-borne trade from China through the Indian Ocean may have reduced the amount of trade along the traditional Silk Roads, while the rise of Shia Iran from 1500 severed commercial links to the Mediterranean. On the other hand, other trade routes increased in importance, particularly the north–south routes linking Transoxiana with Russia and Mughal India. Furthermore, even trade with China seems to have been substantial for much of the sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup> All in all, there is no clear evidence of commercial decline in Central Asia in the sixteenth century, nor is there clear evidence of significant growth.

Periods of peace and stability may have allowed for modest agricultural growth. Several of the Shibanid khans supported agriculture, maintained irrigation works, and encouraged artisan crafts. Abdullah II, in particular, patronized architecture and the arts in the 1580s and 1590s, though scholarship fared less well under the increasing influence of the Naqshbandiyya Sufis.<sup>46</sup>

The growing influence of the Sufi orders in the urbanized lands of Transoxiana and Moghulistan parallels the introduction of Yellow Hat Buddhism in Mongolia. Like Lamaism, Central Asian Islam was both decentralized and shaped by shamanic ritual practices. But it was also politically and commercially engaged. Uzbek rulers had close ties to the Sufi orders; the Yasawiyya order had provided the troops that helped Muhammad Shibanid build his

power.<sup>47</sup> Members of the Naqshbandiyya order advised Uzbek khans, married into ruling lineages, and often controlled large amounts of wealth through endowments or *waqf* that were free of taxes. The Sufi orders owed much of their prestige to claims of descent from the prophet Muhammad. They ran madrasas and holy sites such as the tombs of saints, conducted missionary work amongst pastoral nomads, influenced craft guilds, and maintained extensive and profitable commercial networks.<sup>48</sup>

The increasingly theocratic tone of government under the Uzbek is apparent in the following nearly contemporary account of Khan Ubaydullah (khan from 1533–1539).

First of all he was a *Muslim* ruler, devout, pious, abstinent. He scrupulously applied the tenets of the Holy Law to all matters of religion, confession, commonwealth, state, the army, and the populace, and would not suffer a deviation from this law by a hair's breadth. In the thicket of valor he was [like] a charging lion, in the sea of generosity his palm was [like] a pearl-bearing shell – an individual adorned with an array of good qualities. He wrote the seven styles of calligraphy ... He copied several exemplars of God's Word [i.e., the Qur'an].<sup>49</sup>

East of Transoxiana, in Moghulistan, it makes sense to distinguish between three distinct zones: in the north-west, Semirechie and Zungharia; in the south, the "Altishahr" or "six cities" of the Tarim basin; and Uighuristan, the region around Turfan and Hami in the north-east. In name at least, Chagatayid khans ruled all these regions, but in reality they were often controlled by members of the powerful Dughlat clans from Chagatay's old capital of Almalyk in Zungharia, or by Sufi *khwajas*.<sup>50</sup> All these regions were periodically threatened by pastoral nomads to their north. These included the Kazakh, the Oirat, and also the Kyrgyz, who originated in the Upper Yenisei region but moved towards Semirechie and Zungharia from the late fifteenth century, probably as allies of the Oirat.<sup>51</sup>

Early in the sixteenth century, a Chagatayid ruler of Kashgaria, Sa'id Khan (r. 1514–1533), established peaceful relations with his brother, Mansur, the ruler of much of Moghulistan and Turfan (r. 1503–1543), and also with China. Peaceful relations allowed a revival of trade with China for much of the sixteenth century. The *Tarikh-i Rashidi* records that:

From this peace and reconciliation between the two brothers resulted such security and prosperity for the people that any one might travel alone between Kamul [Hami] or Khitai [China] and the country of Farghana without provision for the journey and without fear of molestation.<sup>52</sup>

We have a fascinating account of trade in this region from slightly later, in 1603, when a Jesuit, Bento de Goes, traveled from India through Kabul to the Tarim basin.<sup>53</sup> In Yarkand, he bought a stock of jade to trade with before spending a year waiting for a caravan he could join. During this period, the Chagatayid ruler of Kashgaria auctioned the right to lead a caravan, and the successful bidder (who had offered 200 bags of musk) sold the right to join

the caravan. The caravan with which De Goes traveled set off with 72 merchants, each with a passport from the khan naming them as “ambassadors” for what the Chinese would regard, inevitably, as a tribute rather than a trade mission. De Goes himself seems to have been poisoned as the caravan approached the Chinese border, by other members of the caravan to whom he had lent money.

In Moghulistan, as in Transoxiana, Sufis gained increasing influence through their wealth, their political influence, and, in an increasingly theocratic environment, their reputation for holiness. Khoja Taj ad-Din, a disciple of Khoja Ahrar, entered the service of the Moghulistan ruler Ahmed Khan and his successor Mansur Khan (r. 1503–1543) in Turfan. According to a hagiographical contemporary history, the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*:

He [Taj ad-Din] was in attendance on [the two Chagatayid khans] for fifty years .... And he accepted, during all this period, neither offering nor gift, whether it were from the Khans or the Sultans or the generals of the army, or from peasants or merchants. The Khwaja occupied himself, also, with commerce and agriculture. And from these occupations there accrued to him, by the blessing of the Most High God, great wealth. ... The poor and indigent – nay, more, the peasant, the villager, the artisan and the merchant all profited [by his wealth]. For this reason no one denied him anything, and all the affairs of the kingdom were laid before him in detail.<sup>54</sup>

In reality, Taj ad-Din clearly *did* accept gifts and was so actively involved in politics that he died in 1533 in battle against the Chinese.

The increasing importance of such religious figures in early modern Central Asia has several explanations. First, their reputation for probity gave legitimacy to rulers with limited military power, and in an era before nation-states, religious identities provided a powerful connective tissue linking different levels of society. Second, Sufi leaders were active in trade, and the religious networks they created linked cities, reached deep into the steppes, and helped create commercial partnerships across geographical, linguistic, and ecological frontiers. Third, their religious prestige, commercial networks, and engagement with politics gave Sufi *khwajas* great political influence, so that many ended up playing important political roles. The networks they created forged powerful links in regions where political and military networks were in decline and the prospects for long-term economic and demographic growth were limited. As Millward puts it, effective mobilization in this region involved “both politico-military and religio-ideological forms of power,” and as political and military power declined, religious forms of power increased in importance.<sup>55</sup>

## THE PONTIC STEPPES

West of the Urals, khanates survived as remnants of the Golden Horde. One of them, the Crimean khanate, would play an important political, military, and economic role for much of the sixteenth century.

In 1500, the khanates of Kazan', Astrakhan, and Crimea were severely cut-down versions of the Golden Horde. They had pastoralist armies, capitals in major trading cities, control of significant trade flows, Chinggisid dynasties, and Muslim traditions, but limited demographic and material resources. By 1500, the khanate of Astrakhan was a rump state of the Great Horde, based on the Volga delta and sharing the lands once held by the Great Horde with parts of the Nogai Horde. The khanate of Kazan' was, briefly, a more powerful polity, controlling the cities and pastures of the middle Volga, and the trade routes that passed through them. But internal conflicts, dynastic divisions, and limited resources ensured that the Kazan' khanate never emerged as a major regional power.

In contrast, the Crimean khanate, despite its formal subordination to the Ottoman Empire, would play a major role in the Pontic steppes for two centuries. The khans of Crimea collected tributes from Moscow (between 7,000 and 12,000 rubles a year in the early seventeenth century), and from Lithuania/Poland and several Danube principalities.<sup>56</sup> Their armies checked Muscovite and Polish expansion in the Pontic steppes, and raiding for slaves and livestock enriched its rulers and nobles and drained resources from Muscovy and Lithuania/Poland.

The khanate loomed large in the diplomatic, military, and commercial calculations of both Muscovy and Lithuania/Poland. In the late fifteenth century, during the reign of Ivan III, Crimea and Muscovy were allies, and Crimea directed its armies against Lithuania/Poland. But after the defeat of the Great Horde, in 1502, Crimean claims on Kazan' and raids on Muscovy's southern borders undermined the alliance. War broke out in 1521, after Moscow installed its own candidate in Kazan'. Allied with the new khanate of Astrakhan, in 1521 Crimea launched a huge raid that reached Moscow itself and drove Tsar Vasili III from his capital. Warfare between Muscovy and the Crimean khanate would continue for much of the sixteenth century.

What was the source of the khanate's power? First, its khans enjoyed genealogical legitimacy. The Girays were Chinggisids. After they crushed the Great Horde in 1502, they could also claim to be the legitimate heirs to the Golden Horde. These claims counted both in the steppes and in Istanbul. Second, the Girays ruled a variegated territory with diverse resources. In the cities of Crimea, the khans ruled a polyglot urban population of Italians, Armenians, Jews, Greeks, and Caucasians.<sup>57</sup> Crimea's trading cities had once provided significant direct revenues, but after the Ottoman Empire took Caffa and most of the Crimean south coast in 1475, the khans lost most of their commercial revenues. Ottoman control of Azov and the coast of Moldavia also cut Crimea off from the rich trade routes through the Black Sea and the Balkans.

However, Ottoman suzerainty offered some compensation for the loss of the Crimean port cities. Even if the Ottomans sometimes dabbled in the elections for a new khan, the khans themselves were relatively independent, even issuing their own coinage. The Ottomans provided subsidies and sometimes military support. Khan Saadet Giray I (r. 1524–1532) received a bodyguard of Ottoman troops, and in 1541, Khan Sahib-Giray was able to take his troops across the Oka river with the protection of Ottoman artillery and contingents

of Janissaries. Ottoman protection shielded the khanate, because its enemies feared Ottoman reprisals.<sup>58</sup> Ottoman protection also made the khans attractive patrons and allies for groups such as the “lesser” Nogai, who formed a durable alliance with the khanate for much of the sixteenth century. In addition to Ottoman subsidies, the Crimean khans also claimed and received (as heirs of the Golden Horde) substantial tributes from Muscovy and Lithuania/Poland. Finally, the khanate had access to rich markets in Istanbul, Anatolia, and the Ottoman protectorates along the western shores of the Black Sea for timber, salt, grains, fish, livestock products, and slaves.

But the khanate also wielded more traditional forms of power. Its military power arose from its authority in the Pontic steppes. That control was never complete:

the Crimean khanate ... directly administered little land beyond the Crimean peninsula. The khan’s nomadic Tatar subjects seasonally utilized portions of the steppe north of the Black Sea and his forces regularly mounted raids across the steppe into Muscovite territories, but in effect for much of the year the steppe was a huge, unpoliced, no-man’s-land.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, the Crimean khan had considerable influence in the steppes, and could raise formidable steppe armies. So the khanate offers a clear example of the *smychka*. The Crimean khans mobilized steppe armies partly through the four *qarachi* *beys*, the leaders of the four major Crimean clans. By 1550, the four clans controlled some 500,000 “souls,” which gave them in effect a veto over major military decisions.

In the sixteenth century steppe armies were still easy to mobilize, and very effective. Neither Muscovite nor Lithuanian/Polish armies really got their measure. Before 1550 there were 43 major Crimean attacks on Muscovy.<sup>60</sup> Sigismund von Herberstein, the Austrian diplomat who visited Moscow early in the century, described the 1521 raid. Though Moscow itself was protected by fortifications built under Ivan III, the devastating raids on the surrounding countryside were ended only when the government agreed to hand over massive tributes, and Crimean leaders began to fear an attack by the khanate of Astrakhan. As they retreated, Crimean armies took large numbers of prisoners, many of whom were massacred because they were too old or infirm to be worth transporting to the Black Sea slave markets. Herberstein writes:

For the elderly and sick, who do not fetch much and are unfit for work, are given by the Tatars to their young men, much as one gives a hare to a hound to make it snappish; they are stoned to death or thrown into the sea ...<sup>61</sup>

Crimean raids continued for much of the sixteenth century. Most destructive of all was the 1571 attack by an army of 40,000 that included Nogai and Cherkess allies. It burnt Moscow and took thousands of captives.

At the core of the khan’s armies was a personal guard of up to 1,000 musketeers, organized like the Ottoman Janissaries and accompanied by light artillery. But most of the army consisted of traditional pastoralist cavalry. They

usually traveled with two or three horses, which could be eaten if necessary, and carried provisions that would be supplemented by foraging *en route*. Crimean armies advanced north along seven main invasion routes, usually at harvest time when villagers were well fed and their barns were full.<sup>62</sup> The armies traveled in columns with their spare mounts, preceded by advance guards and scouts, so that a French observer, Beauplan, described an army of 80,000 soldiers with its 200,000 horse as like a huge forest in motion. However, even the largest raiding armies preferred to avoid formal battles, as their main goal was to harvest people, livestock, and booty from unprotected villages, which they would burn, killing all who resisted. Then they would retreat, moving along different routes to avoid being intercepted, before stopping to share the spoils, at least a fifth or tenth of which went to the leader. A normal ratio of slaves to raiding soldiers was 1:3 so that the number of slaves harvested would normally be about one third of the size of the raiding army, or about 10,000 captives for a raiding army of 30,000.<sup>63</sup>

After the khanate lost control of the Black Sea ports, the slave trade, whose roots go back at least to the first millennium BCE, became the most important of all trades for Crimean pastoralists. That is why small raids, often undertaken on the initiative of local leaders and without the khan's permission, were almost annual affairs in the sixteenth century. The slave trade paid for the Crimean army, by providing soldiers and their leaders with booty. It was cheap and easy to allow slave raids, or turn a blind eye to them, even when the khan might have preferred peaceful relations with his northern neighbors.<sup>64</sup> Slave raiding shows the *smychka* at work in looting zones, as it was really a way of levying erratic tributes from agrarian lands. Slaves were sold through the markets of Caffa or Bakhchesaray or Evpatoria, from where they ended up in the Ottoman army or administration or as laborers or galley slaves or domestic servants, while some were traded to other countries, or put to work in Crimea itself as farm laborers or used as herders in the steppes or offered for ransom.<sup>65</sup> In 1642, 280 rowers were freed from an Ottoman galley after a mutiny. Over 200 turned out to be from Ukraine and 20 from Muscovy. Some had been galley slaves for 40 years. Generally, Crimea had a free hand for its slaving operations in the northern Caucasus, Muscovy, and Lithuania/Poland. But the slave trade may have reduced other forms of trade between Muscovy and Crimea in furs, textiles, and other goods, a cost worth paying because the slave trade was so profitable, so critical to military mobilization, and so damaging to Muscovy.<sup>66</sup>

The Crimean khanate illustrates the benefits and limitations of the traditional *smychka*. Military mobilization depended on the support of the leading clans, and their support had to be bought by allowing them to raid and trade. The Crimean khans were never true autocrats. Nevertheless, unlike Lithuania/Poland, the khanate enjoyed considerable cultural cohesion (its Christian and Jewish city dwellers had little significance for military mobilization), and Chinggisid lineage lent prestige to its khans. But like the Golden Horde in its later years, the khanate was threatened by the same fault line between its urban and pastoral wings, particularly as its khans resided in the cities. Early in the sixteenth century, Khan Mengli-Giray began to beautify his capital,

Solgat (Eski Kirim). He built a palace, the Aşlama Saray, designed by the Venetian architect Aleviz, who was detained in Crimea in 1502 as he returned from building extensions to the Moscow Kremlin.<sup>67</sup> Mengli-Giray also built mosques and madrasas, and established an administrative system that would endure, in its essentials, until the conquest of the khanate in 1783. Little of this urban work was of interest to the nomads who made up the core of the Crimean army. But the eventual decline of the khanate would owe less to internal splits than to the slow shift in the balance of power between Inner Eurasia's nomadic and agrarian regions.

## NOTES

- 1 This is why the year 1500 counts as a threshold in the history of what John and William McNeill have called *The Human Web*.
- 2 Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange and Ecological Imperialism*; for a general survey of globalization, see Osterhammel and Petersson, *Globalization*.
- 3 Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, 80.
- 4 Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories," 292.
- 5 On these difficulties, see Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow*, 33–34.
- 6 Poe, "A People Born to Slavery," 84.
- 7 On the "Military Revolution," the classic studies are Roberts, "The Military Revolution" and Parker, *The Military Revolution*; see also McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*; more recent reviews of the idea include Black, "Patterns of Warfare," 33–36, and Childs, "The Military Revolution 1"; the most recent study is Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*.
- 8 Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 17.
- 9 Davies, "Development of Russian Military Power," 177–178; Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 159.
- 10 See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 138.
- 11 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 57, 60–61.
- 12 Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade*, 202; and 201–203 for Yang Chi-sheng's long critique of the trading policy, written in 1551.
- 13 Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade*, 104.
- 14 Cited in Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade*, 50–51; the full memorandum is at 206–208.
- 15 Dmytryshyn et al., *Russia's Conquest of Siberia*, 1: 86–87.
- 16 Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade*, 106, 173; Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture*, 69.
- 17 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*.
- 18 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 247.
- 19 Bawden, *Modern History*, 26; Lamas of Gangdanthekchending Monastery, *Buddhism in Mongolia*, 15–16; Heissig, *Religions of Mongolia*, 24.
- 20 Lamas of Gangdanthekchending Monastery, *Buddhism in Mongolia*, 21, 27–28.
- 21 Heissig, *Religions of Mongolia*, 25; Serruys, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia," 2: 538, argues that Lamaism never really disappeared so that what happened in the late sixteenth century was really a "revival."
- 22 On his "conversion," see Serruys, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia," and Heissig, "A Mongolian Source"; see also Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 490.
- 23 Bawden, *Modern History*, 28.

- 24 Moses and Halkovic, *Introduction*, 104.
- 25 Bawden, *Modern History*, 32.
- 26 Heissig describes this rapid process in *Religions of Mongolia*, Ch. 3.
- 27 Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture*, 98; Bawden, *Modern History*, 32.
- 28 Heissig, *Religions of Mongolia*, 26–27; Altan Khan himself had been a devout shamanist, and reportedly tried to treat his gout in the traditional way, by placing his feet in the opened body of a man.
- 29 Bawden, *Modern History*, 27–28.
- 30 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 19.
- 31 The complex military, diplomatic, and commercial games played in these borderland environments are described superbly in Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*.
- 32 On Kasim's "law code," see Klyashtorny and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 276.
- 33 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 11; Klyashtorny and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 293ff.
- 34 Wheeler, *Modern History*, 32; Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 13.
- 35 There is a good account of Kazakh society in Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 13ff.
- 36 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 14.
- 37 McChesney, "The Chinggisid Restoration."
- 38 Khalid, "Nation into History," 127.
- 39 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*; and see the discussion of the different political, cultural, and religious worlds of the cities and the steppe in Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, Chs. 1–2.
- 40 Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 84–85.
- 41 Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 220.
- 42 Bregel, "The New Uzbek States," 405; Sela, "Prescribing the Boundaries of Knowledge," 73.
- 43 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 424.
- 44 Hambly, *Zentralasien*, 184.
- 45 Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 150; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 74–77, for a good discussion of the Silk Roads in this period.
- 46 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 106.
- 47 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 425–426; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 81.
- 48 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 80.
- 49 Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 155, from Haydar Mirza (1499–1551), a cousin of Babur, and author of the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, a history of the Chagatayids, on whom see Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 161.
- 50 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 70–71.
- 51 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 70–71; on the Kyrgyz, see Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 159.
- 52 Cited in Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 75.
- 53 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 75–76.
- 54 Cited from Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 85.
- 55 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 78.
- 56 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 22.
- 57 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 6.
- 58 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 12, 8.
- 59 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 15.
- 60 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 6, 23, 14.
- 61 Cited in Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 16.
- 62 These are described in Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 18–20.
- 63 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 21–24.
- 64 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 23.



- 65 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 25: “In 1646 Sultan Ibrahim allegedly authorized Crimean raids upon Poland and Muscovy so as to requisition rowers for 100 galleys then under construction.”
- 66 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 26.
- 67 Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 16.

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## [6] *1500–1600: AGRARIAN SOCIETIES WEST OF THE VOLGA*

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In agrarian regions west of the Volga, we see more evidence of the technological and commercial dynamism of the sixteenth century. This chapter will briefly describe the role of the Ottoman Empire and Lithuania/Poland in the region, before focusing on the growing power of Muscovy.

### *OUTER EURASIAN OR BORDERLAND POLITIES*

By 1500, Lithuania/Poland and the Ottoman Empire both had extensive interests in Inner Eurasia. Large parts of Lithuania/Poland were within Inner Eurasia, while the Ottoman Empire had some pastoralist populations and a strong symbolic, historical, and religious connection with the pastoralists of Crimea and the Pontic steppes. Nevertheless, both Lithuania/Poland and the Ottoman Empire were anchored in Outer Eurasia. That's where most of their concerns were, and that is why neither polity committed fully to the difficult and expensive task of building a durable empire within Inner Eurasia.

### THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire became a significant Inner Eurasian power after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 encouraged Ottoman expansion into the Black Sea region. Between 1500 and 1600 the Ottoman Empire expanded to control eastern Anatolia, Egypt and Syria, parts of Arabia, and much of Hungary, and its population grew from c.12 million to more than 20 million.<sup>1</sup> With control over the eastern Mediterranean, the Ottoman Empire dominated trade routes from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, and Ottoman fleets could be found in both oceans. Indeed, it was the Ottoman monopoly over trade routes from the Indian Ocean that drove European navigators to seek alternative routes to Asia around Africa or across the Atlantic.

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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By the early sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was one of the world's great powers. Its vast territories yielded the recruits, the cash, and almost all the resources (apart from tin) to build a modern gunpowder army.<sup>2</sup> But the era of rapid expansion ended after the reign of Suleyman (1520–1566), as European defensive lines were strengthened on the Hungarian frontier, as American silver began to flow through Europe, and as Christian navies secured the western Mediterranean after the battle of Lepanto in 1571. Nevertheless, for three more centuries, the Ottoman Empire would be a major power in both the Mediterranean region and western Inner Eurasia. In many respects, the Ottoman Empire would provide both Lithuania/Poland and Muscovy with a model of how to mobilize from diverse territories that included steppes, farmlands, oceans, deserts, and wealthy trading systems.

Like their Byzantine predecessors, Ottoman rulers sought to control trade routes through the north Caucasus steppes and the cities of Crimea, as well as the wealthy regions of Wallachia and Moldavia on the western shores of the Black Sea. By creating a protectorate over the Crimean khanate in 1475, Istanbul acquired a valuable military buffer against Lithuania/Poland. The Crimean khanate also provided a valuable new ally in Ottoman attempts to control the Moldavian and Bessarabian coasts of the Black Sea, which were vital to the defense of its Balkan provinces. In 1484, in alliance with Crimea, Ottoman armies captured the Moldavian fortress of Akkerman, which gave them control of much of the west coast of the Black Sea. They also established a garrison at Azov (Tana), east of the Crimean khanate, which gave them control of the Don river outlets into the Black Sea and enabled them to check Cossack naval raids on the Black Sea coast.<sup>3</sup> Early in the sixteenth century, with bases at Azov, the southern Crimea, and along the western shores of the Black Sea, the Ottomans dominated the Black Sea and the trades that flowed through it, and gained significant influence in the Pontic steppes.

However, Inner Eurasia was of secondary importance for the Ottoman Empire, so it was normally content to manage the politics of the Pontic steppes indirectly, through the Crimean khanate and its Nogai allies. Geography explains why Ottoman diplomacy often seems so similar to that of the Byzantine Empire. But there was also a crucial difference. Whereas Byzantium had religious ties to the Christian and agrarian polities of Rus', the Ottoman Empire's religious affiliations were with the Muslim societies of Crimea and the Pontic steppes. Over the next few centuries, this difference would lend a crusading edge to contests for control of the Pontic steppes.

## THE COMMONWEALTH OF LITHUANIA/POLAND

By 1500, Lithuania/Poland included much of modern Belarus and Ukraine. Though its ruling dynasty was Catholic, its eastern territories contained large Orthodox populations and were exposed to devastating slave raids from the Pontic steppes. In 1500, Lithuania/Poland had a population of perhaps 7 million, scattered thinly over a region twice as large as France. Its economy was dominated by subsistence agriculture, but after the capture of the Baltic port of Danzig in 1455, it was buoyed by sales of grain and other agricultural

produce to the expanding markets of western Europe. Loans from western European merchants helped Poles exploit large estates in western Ukraine, whose grain they sent down the Vistula to Danzig and on to Europe.<sup>4</sup> With a population of 50,000 by 1600, Danzig was the largest and most commercial of Polish-Lithuanian cities. But there were many smaller cities scattered through the interior, such as Krakow (the capital, with a population of only 14,000 in 1600), and Lwow, Vilnius, and Warsaw, with populations of less than 20,000 people. Limited urbanization and commercialization explain why the towns were never powerful enough to rival the traditional nobility, the *szlachta*.

The *szlachta* made up about 7 percent of the population, though many nobles lived like their peasants. From the late fifteenth century, the upper levels of the *szlachta* wielded great authority through a bicameral parliamentary body, the *Sejm*. The *Nihil Novi* law of 1505 ensured that no new laws could be passed without the consent of the *Sejm*. The result was a long-standing political and fiscal standoff between different classes and ethnic and confessional groups. In 1569, at Lublin, an increasingly Polonized Lithuanian nobility (most Lithuanian nobles now spoke Polish rather than Lithuanian) agreed to a new and closer Union, the “Commonwealth of the Two Nations, the Polish and Lithuanian.” Lithuania and Poland now shared a common ruler and Diet, but kept separate administrations and armies. The Union of Lublin really marked the increasing economic, demographic, and political power of Poland, for much of Ukraine now passed into Polish control, and there were now three times as many Poles as Lithuanians in the joint Diet. In 1572, when the Jagiellon dynasty died out, the joint monarchy became elective.

The Commonwealth’s human and material resources, though significant, were scattered, like those of Muscovy, over large areas, and levels of productivity and commercialization were low in comparison with western Europe. It had many poorly defended borders because its eastern provinces were, topographically, part of the huge Inner Eurasian flatlands. It faced European rivals in the west, Sweden in the north, Muscovy in the north-east, and constant raiding from the Crimean khanate in the south-east.

The social and political structures of the Commonwealth made it difficult to mobilize resources effectively enough to meet these threats. Cultural and political divisions exacerbated the difficulties, for the Commonwealth straddled many cultural, religious, linguistic, ecological, and political frontiers.

The whirlpool of foreign and national influences found concrete expression in the welter of different dress styles adopted by the nobility, with native, western and oriental influences (the latter arriving largely through Hungary) combining to produce a distinctive couture of caftan, boots, belts and breeches around the mid-[sixteenth] century.<sup>5</sup>

While much of the Polish nobility was militantly Catholic, Lithuania had been largely pagan until the fourteenth century. Then Lithuanian expansion incorporated large areas of Belarus and Ukraine, whose populations spoke Eastern Slavic languages and mostly professed Orthodox Christianity. By 1500, even in Lithuania, Slavic speakers outnumbered Lithuanian speakers.<sup>6</sup>

Political and economic interests tugged the Commonwealth in different directions. While Lithuania's natural orientation was towards the eastern shores of the Baltic or south towards Ukraine and the Black Sea, Poland looked westwards. Different borders also required different forms of military mobilization. On the eastern borders, traditional cavalry were effective until the seventeenth century, while in the west, gunpowder transformed warfare much earlier.

These divisions affected the Commonwealth in many ways. The nobility and towns protected their traditional privileges by limiting the power of monarchs. No monarch of the Commonwealth enjoyed the authority that Ivan III of Muscovy enjoyed in the late fifteenth century. To mobilize armies, monarchs had to engage in complex negotiations with suppliers of troops, revenue, and equipment, including nobles and princes, mercenaries, who had to be paid largely out of the royal purse, and the traditional levy of the nobility, the *pospolite ruszenie*. In principle, the feudal levy should have yielded armies of up to 50,000 in the middle of the sixteenth century, but rulers were forbidden to use it abroad without the consent of the *Sejm*, and then only for three months a year. When used inside the country, the army was supposed to be disbanded after two weeks on campaign.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, military discipline could be precarious. In 1537 the *pospolite ruszenie*, which had assembled for an attack on Moldavia, refused to fight and had to be disbanded.<sup>8</sup> Securing funding for military campaigns was always difficult. The nobility regarded most forms of central taxation as exceptional, and expected their rulers to finance warfare from their royal domains, even though the *Sejm* restricted royal authority over royal lands.<sup>9</sup> Polish nobles were particularly reluctant to grant taxes for campaigns in the east, as long as Poland and Lithuania remained separate nations.

By 1503 Lithuania/Poland had lost a third of the lands it held in the early 1490s, and in 1514 it lost the crucial fortress of Smolensk. In the 1550s, Sigismund II Augustus (1548–1572) had to resort to many different stratagems to form an army capable of attacking Livonia at the start of what would become a prolonged war with Muscovy. He managed to assemble substantial armies after selling royal lands, borrowing money, persuading the *Sejm* to levy the occasional special tax, or summoning troops from magnates or the *pospolite ruszenie*, but it proved impossible to hold armies together for long periods.<sup>10</sup> In 1572 the Jagiellonian dynasty ended with the death of Sigismund II. His successor, Henri of Anjou, was elected on conditions that further weakened the ruler's power to mobilize.

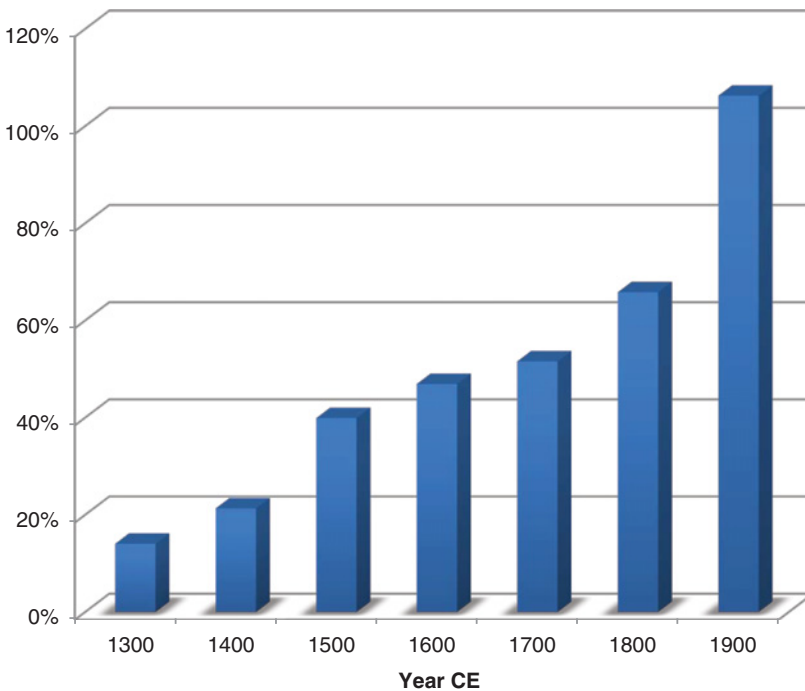
The remarkable successes of Lithuanian/Polish armies in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries made it seem that such methods should work. And they would continue to work, just, throughout the sixteenth century. But as the costs and scale of gunpowder warfare increased, so did the importance of more effective fiscal and military mobilization. It may be that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the survival of the Commonwealth owed as much to Muscovite failures and Crimean raids as to skillful mobilization and brilliant military commanders, such as King John III Sobieski (r. 1674–1696), whose armies defeated the Ottoman Empire outside Vienna in 1683.

## MUSCOVY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

If the Crimean khanate provides a paradigm of the traditional, Inner Eurasian *smychka*, Muscovy offers a paradigm of the agrarian *smychka*.

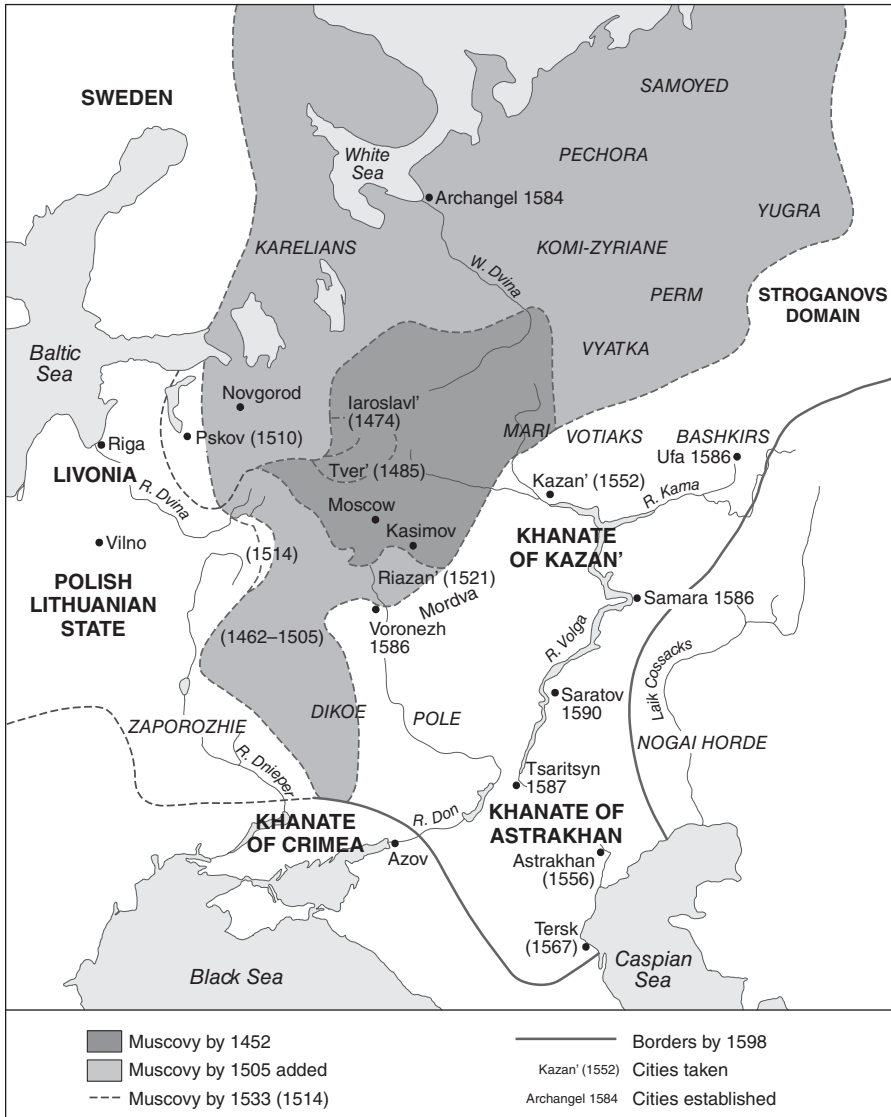
Muscovy mobilized military power from an agrarian population to defend itself against steppe armies in the south, and gunpowder armies to the west. The first key to success was long-term growth. Over time, demographic, economic, and geographical expansion gave the rulers of Moscow increasing human and material resources. The second key was efficient mobilization of these accumulating resources, which allowed territorial expansion, which provided more land, people, and resources for further mobilization, in a powerful feedback cycle. Figure 6.1 and Map 6.1 hint at the long-term synergy between population growth and geographical expansion in Muscovite and Russian history over seven centuries.

For much of the sixteenth century, Muscovy's rulers played these mobilizational games with considerable success. But towards the end of the century, the strains of sustained mobilization began to show, and there was a real danger that, if mishandled, the system could collapse. Excessive mobilizational pressure encouraged peasant flight, particularly near underpopulated borderlands. It also encouraged predatory farming that threatened to exhaust the region's



**Figure 6.1** Growth of Muscovy's population as a proportion of Inner Eurasia's population. Data from McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 78–82, 158–165.



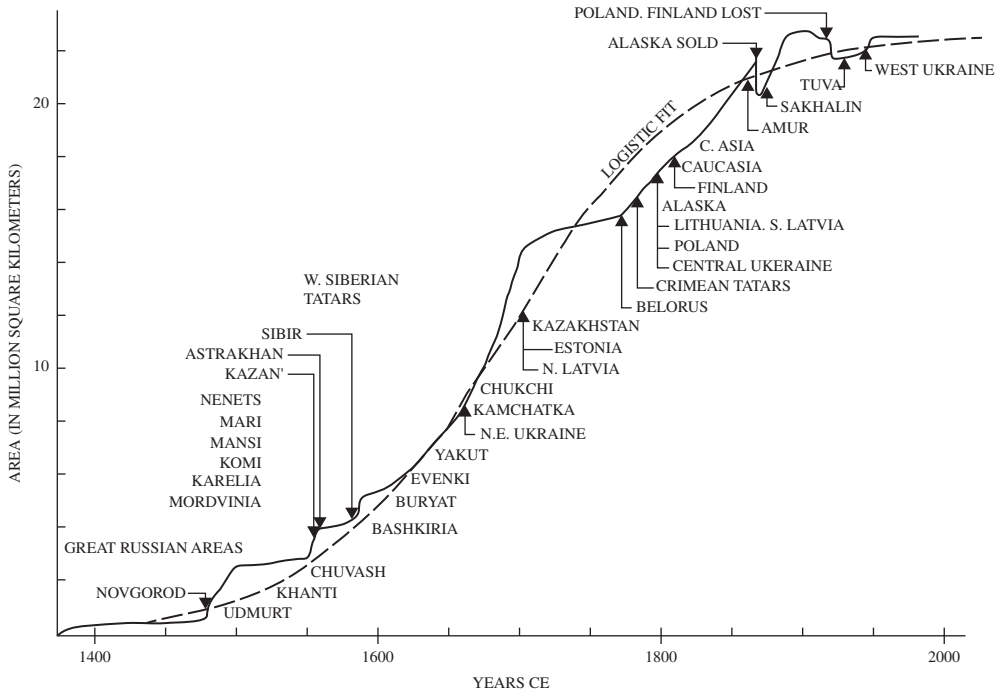


**Map 6.1** Territorial expansion of Muscovy to 1598. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, 44.

thin forest soils. There was no guarantee that the expansion of Muscovy, which had been so impressive in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, would continue indefinitely.

## EXPANSION

In the sixteenth century, there was still plenty of scope for agricultural intensification. Peasants and landlords could and did introduce more intensive farming



**Figure 6.2** Chart showing expansion of Russia on a logistic curve. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, xvii.

methods, such as three-field crop rotations. But with short growing seasons, thin soils, and limited financial and technological resources, the possibilities for intensification were limited. However, unlike most of its rivals, Muscovy also had the option of *extensification*, or growth through territorial expansion, because along its southern, eastern, and northern borders there were large areas of underpopulated and ill-defended but potentially farmable land. The contrast with Lithuania/Poland, which was surrounded by populous and powerful rivals on all but its easternmost frontiers, is striking. In Muscovy, for several centuries, mobilizing more resources meant, above all, territorial expansion (Figure 6.2).

In the sixteenth century, Muscovy expanded in three main directions: to the east and south along the Volga river; to the south into the Pontic steppes; and to the west into the Baltic region and Belarus. At the death of Vasili III in 1533, Muscovy controlled about 2.8 million sq. kilometers. In 1600, it controlled c.5.4 million sq. kilometers – almost twice as much territory.<sup>11</sup>

Expansion to the east began with the conquest of Kazan' in 1552. When Vasili III died in 1533, his heir, Ivan IV, was still a minor. Ivan's minority, from 1533–1547, provided a striking reminder of the importance of elite discipline to Muscovy's power, as the government was paralyzed by conflicts among the leading boyar families, and could not contemplate ambitious foreign adventures. But in 1552, within five years of his accession, Ivan launched an attack

on an old rival, the khanate of Kazan'. Muscovy's armies were larger and better equipped. Ivan led 150,000 troops to Kazan', whose armies numbered no more than 30,000. Moscow's armies also brought 150 pieces of artillery, an 18-foot-high siege machine, and explosives, which they used to destroy the city's water supply.<sup>12</sup> The city fell on October 2, 1552.

The conquest of the Muslim khanate of Kazan' marked a significant turning point in the history of the Muscovite mobilizational system because this was (with the partial exception of expansion into the far north) the first time that Muscovy had incorporated populations that were culturally different from those of Muscovy. If empire means rule over populations with different religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions, this was the beginning of Muscovite and Russian traditions of imperial rule. And, as a recent study argues, empires in this sense – “large political units ... that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people” – have been the most important forms of large-scale political and mobilizational power for several millennia.<sup>13</sup> As Muscovy, too, became an empire, it began to face new challenges, as cultural, religious, and historical differences were added to the traditional difficulties of mobilization. Like the traditional nomadic *smychka*, the agrarian *smychka* now had to cope with cultural, linguistic, and religious differences as well as the normal challenges of mobilizing in lands with limited resources.

Ivan's victory over Kazan' recapitulated Prince Sviatoslav's conquest of Bulghar in the 960s. Like that campaign, it invited further expansion down the Volga river towards the Caucasus. As ruler of Kazan', Ivan began to receive tributes from steppe polities, from the Nogai hordes, from the khans of the Sibir khanate, and from the Bashkir.<sup>14</sup> In 1556, just four years after the capture of Kazan', Muscovite troops conquered Astrakhan near the Golden Horde's first capital of Saray, 600 years after Prince Sviatoslav had sacked the Khazar capital of Itill in 965. Muscovy now controlled the entire Volga river trade route to the Caspian Sea, and Moscow's allies, the Nogai, settled in the steppes north of the Caspian Sea until they were displaced in the 1630s by the Oirat Mongols who came to be known as the Kalmyk.

Control of the Volga river created a new defensive barrier because, for most of its length, the river was too broad to be crossed easily by pastoralist armies. Now, strategically sited fortresses could block major incursions from the Kazakh steppes.<sup>15</sup> The Volga also had huge commercial importance. Russian merchants were particularly interested in opportunities for trade with Persia, Central Asia, and India, so Russian south-bound trade began to shift eastwards, away from its traditional focus on the Ottoman Empire and the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup> Astrakhan became Muscovy's commercial window on the south. Here, Muscovite merchants and officials received caravans from Central Asia and ships from Gilan and the khanate of Shemakha, both under Persian suzerainty.<sup>17</sup> Persian ships trading in the Caspian Sea were mostly manned by Armenian merchants, though in the seventeenth century Indian merchants would play an increasingly vital role in Astrakhan's trade with Persia. Astrakhan became an important base for the trade in fish and locally produced salt. From Astrakhan, goods were hauled or rowed up the Volga river to Kazan', in boats mostly owned by Astrakhan merchants. From there,

they traveled to Nizhnii Novgorod, where they were unloaded before being carried to Moscow by land, in carts or sleds.

Ivan IV dreamed of conquering the Crimean khanate too. In 1567, Muscovite soldiers built a fort at Tersk, near where the Terek enters the Caspian Sea. In 1569, wary of Moscow's ambitions in the northern Caucasus, Ottoman and Crimean forces tried to reconquer Astrakhan by building a canal from the Don to the Volga. However, the arrival of Russian troops down the Volga showed that it was easier to control Astrakhan from the Volga than across the steppes. Ottoman forces were driven back to Azov on the Black Sea, in a tortuous retreat during which two thirds of the original army was lost. But Moscow's forces were almost as over-extended as those of the Ottomans, and in 1571, after just four years, Ivan abandoned Tersk.

Along Russia's southern steppe frontiers, expansion was slower and more difficult. Under Vasili III, Muscovy had joined Crimea in attacks on Lithuania/Poland. But after Vasili's death in 1533, Crimea allied increasingly with Lithuania/Poland, partly in pursuit of dynastic claims to Kazan'. Defending against Crimean raids became a primary motive for fort building along Muscovy's southern frontiers.

But fortified strongpoints also attracted would-be colonizers for whom they offered protection, markets, and employment, so that colonization and defense went hand in hand.<sup>18</sup> Along Muscovy's disputed and poorly policed steppe borderlands, with their rich black soils, illegal peasant migrations would provide a demographic ground bass to Muscovite expansion until the end of the eighteenth century. Most peasant migrants hoped that Moscow and Crimea would ignore them, as they cleared land and built villages. But Moscow, though wary of peasant flight from its central provinces, was also keen to protect settlers in order to populate, supply, and defend its southern provinces.<sup>19</sup> Over many centuries, such processes created a distinctive borderland culture, whose most striking symbol is the emergence of the Cossacks, culturally diverse borderland communities recruited as much from Tatars or peoples of the Caucasus as from Slavic populations.<sup>20</sup>

Similar communities had existed in the Pontic steppes in the time of Kievan Rus' and probably a millennium before that. In the Kievan era, groups of Rusified Turks or Caucasians sometimes received payments or resources from Rus' principalities for border protection or information about potential raids. Muscovite rulers also understood that friendly borderland communities could harass Crimea in ways that Moscow could plausibly disavow, just as regional Crimean leaders harassed Muscovy or Poland. The easiest and cheapest way of influencing Cossack communities was by offering subsidies or gifts or privileges to their leaders.

In the later sixteenth century, for the first time, Cossack groups entered into formal alliances with Muscovy.<sup>21</sup> The Don Cossack community dated its existence from 1557, when it had its first formal contacts with Moscow.<sup>22</sup> The complex ethnic and cultural mix of Cossack communities is apparent from one of the earliest official references to the Cossacks, in a letter of Ivan IV to the Nogai Tatars. The Tsar wrote: "There are many Cossacks roaming in the steppe, Kazanis, Crimeans, Azovites, and other insolent Cossacks. Even from

our frontiers they mix together with them and go around together.”<sup>23</sup> Cossack communities defy easy classification.

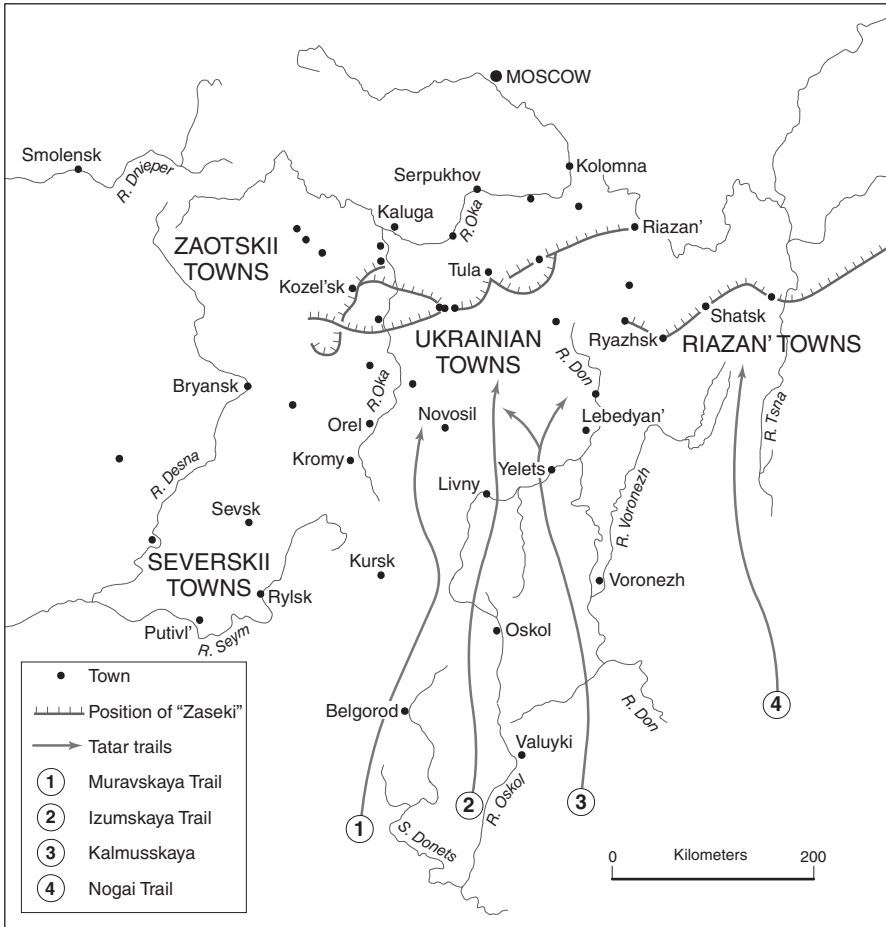
Neither nomads nor peasants, the early [sixteenth-century] Cossacks represented a mix of nomads, fugitives, and entrepreneurs. Their numbers were no more than a few thousand. Their weapons and dress adhered to no common standards and can best be described as multicolored and multicultural: integrating elements from the steppe nomads and populations of North Caucasus. They combined steppe skills of horsemanship with expertise in sea, river, and portage navigation that can be traced to Rus'. Their hybrid raiding culture conducted amphibious operations in both the river basins and prairies of the southern steppes.<sup>24</sup>

Like the principalities of Kievan Rus', Muscovy built fortified lines across the main Tatar invasion routes, and burnt nearby pasturelands to deprive raiding parties of fodder (Map 6.2). The first large-scale Muscovite defensive lines were built along the Oka and Ugra rivers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, using the labor of local peasants and Cossacks. By 1530, this line had reached Tula. Further east, a similar line was built against the Nogai.<sup>25</sup> The government of Ivan IV extended these fortified lines. The so-called *Zasechnaia cherta*, or “Abatis Line,” ran for about 640 kilometers [600 versts, 1 verst = 1.067 kilometers] from Belev through Tula to Riazan'.

Built of interconnecting stretches of felled trees, rivers, and ditches, punctuated at regular intervals with block houses and gates, overseen by a special official and a special chancellery (until 1580), defended by lower and middle-class military servitors ..., patrolled by advance guards on the steppe placed in treetop lookouts, and charged with making sure that “men of war do not come without warning upon the sovereign's frontiers,” the line was massive, intricate, and costly.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1580s and 1590s, Boris Godunov ordered the building of several forts beyond the Abatis line. They included Belgorod and Voronezh, Samara (1586), Saratov (1590), and Tsaritsyn (1588) on the Volga, as well as new forts to the east of the Volga including Ufa in Bashkiria (1586).<sup>27</sup> Once established, the forts attracted legal and illegal immigrants, drawn to the protection they offered and the rich steppe soils that surrounded them. During the Time of Troubles, after the death of Boris Godunov in 1605, this slow, shuffling advance, fort by fort, would halt, not resuming again until 1635.

Like the Ming dynasty in China, which extended and reinforced its own frontier defenses in the sixteenth century, Muscovite officials saw the southern fortified lines as defensive. Steppeland raids exacted huge human costs, directly through the capture of slaves, and indirectly in tributes or ransom payments. Khodarkovsky estimates that Muscovy paid Crimea 1 million rubles in tributes and taxes, and lost between 150,000 and 200,000 Russians to slave raids just in the first half of the seventeenth century. Assuming an average ransom price of 50 rubles per person, redeeming just 100,000 of these captives would have cost about 5 million rubles.<sup>28</sup> At a time when it cost about 5,000 rubles to build a small frontier town, the 1 million rubles paid in tributes to Crimea were equivalent to the cost of building 1,200 small frontier towns, a calculation that



**Map 6.2** Muscovy’s southern frontier at the end of the sixteenth century. Shaw, “Southern Frontiers of Muscovy,” 123. Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

makes fort building look cheap. Khodarkovsky’s calculations illustrate vividly the costs of continuous low-grade and occasional high-grade warfare with pastoral nomads in steppelands with few natural defensive barriers.

Expansion to the west was even more expensive, but it was motivated by the hope of getting easier and cheaper access to the rich trade networks of the Baltic and Europe. In 1558, Ivan IV sent Muscovite armies into Livonia (roughly modern Estonia and Latvia) to protect Muscovy’s western borderlands and secure openings to Baltic trade routes to Europe. Though it began well, the Livonian campaign would turn into a brutal and debilitating contest with Lithuania/Poland and Sweden, lasting many decades. In 1561, the Livonian Order, which had controlled the Baltic region since the early thirteenth century, was dissolved, creating a power vacuum that lured Lithuania/Poland and Sweden into the Baltic, and started a many-sided war that

would last until 1583.<sup>29</sup> In truces negotiated in that year, Muscovy gave up all its conquests in Livonia and surrendered most of the northern Baltic coast to Sweden, except for the mouth of the Neva river. The Livonian war provided a brutal test of Moscow's growing mobilizational capacity.

## MILITARY MOBILIZATION

Since the reign of Ivan III, the *pomest'e* system had provided the most effective way of building large cavalry armies in a society of scattered villages and limited monetization. It required *pomeshchiki* to serve in the army, using resources they had mobilized themselves from the peasants living on the estates they had been granted. In the sixteenth century, most of the army consisted of *pomeshchiki*. By 1600, there were probably some 30,000 *pomeshchiki*, increasing numbers of whom lived along Muscovy's southern fortified lines.<sup>30</sup> The *pomest'e* system transformed the lives of Muscovy's peasants as well as its cavalrymen (Figure 6.3). In 1450 most peasants lived on "black" lands, with no landlords, so they paid dues and taxes only to their prince or the church. By 1600, most of these lands had been transferred to *pomeshchiki*, so the peasants living on them owed labor and taxes to landlords as well.<sup>31</sup>

Early in his reign, as he prepared to attack Kazan', Ivan began reforming Muscovy's mobilizational machinery, with the help of a group of talented officials and clerics. Some reforms were modeled on Ottoman practice, as described in a famous memorandum written in 1549 by Ivan Peresvetov, who had served the Ottoman Empire for many years.<sup>32</sup>

Always jealous of his rights as Tsar, Ivan tried to tie elite privileges more closely to service than to lineage, and to increase his own freedom to appoint and dismiss officials and servitors. Traditionally, government and army appointments had been shaped by traditions of *mestnichestvo*, or clan seniority, and these could limit even the Tsar's freedom to appoint senior military commanders. For example, individuals occasionally refused to serve under or obey those they viewed as social inferiors, for fear of dishonoring their family. To limit the impact of precedence quarrels on military operations, Ivan removed certain military commands from challenge on grounds of seniority. In another reform, that looks like a first attempt to build a personal following, he settled 1,000 provincial *pomeshchiki* near Moscow, so they could be called up rapidly to serve the Tsar. In 1556, Ivan extended the principle that landownership depended on service to all landowners, even those who owned *votchina* (patrimonial) lands, which had previously been free of formal service obligations.<sup>33</sup> Though most nobles already expected to serve in practice, formally at least, the new rule marked a transformation in the legal status of all Muscovite nobles. The 1556 law on service required that every 400 acres of good land should support a fully equipped cavalryman and his horse.

Ivan also reformed the administration and bureaucracy. In 1555–1556, many regions, particularly in the north, were ordered to elect local officials instead of being ruled by centrally appointed *namestniki*. There was nothing democratic about the reform. It was really a way of passing the burden of administrative



**Figure 6.3** Three Russian cavalrymen, published in Sigismund von Herberstein, 1556. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War*, 41.

service to local populations so that resources previously used for the *kormlenie* or “feeding” of *namestniki* could be transferred to Moscow. It is tempting to see the reform as an extension of the *pomest'e* principle from military to administrative service. At the center, the number of government offices or *prikazy* increased, until by 1600 there were more than 24 *prikazy*. The most important of them handled recruitment. The *razriadnyi prikaz* kept lists of military servitors and their service obligations; and the *pomestnyi prikaz* recorded the allocation of *pomest'e*. The *posol'skii prikaz* handled diplomacy and foreign affairs. These three key *prikazy* were all headed by a boyar from the Tsar's inner council, the “boyar дума.”

Ivan also reformed the army. Cavalry recruited from *pomeshchiki* continued to dominate because the most important military threats still came from the



steppes.<sup>34</sup> Imitating Poland, Ivan's government also began to incorporate Cossack units within the army, by offering payment in grain, or cash, or in land. Cossacks were used primarily to garrison frontier towns.

Units fighting on the western borderlands began to include more infantry and artillery.<sup>35</sup> In 1550, Ivan created an infantry guard of 3,000 salaried musketeers (*strel'tsy* or "shooters"), whose armor and dress imitated Ottoman musketeers. Two years later the *strel'tsy* took part in the siege of Kazan'. At first, *strel'tsy* were used in sieges or protected behind *tabors* modeled on the Hungarian *wagenburg*. This was a protective circle of wagons. Its Russian version, proposed by Peresvetov, was the *guliai-gorod* or walking fortress, a system of mobile wooden walls on small carts.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the *strel'tsy* units, the impact of gunpowder was limited in the sixteenth century. The English traveler Richard Chancellor wrote that, "All his [Ivan's] men are horsemen, all archers."<sup>37</sup> As late as 1600, Muscovite armies still used tactics that would have looked familiar in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The army normally fought in two to three echelons, with the Tsar's regiment and the *strel'tsy* as the core, the others surrounding them.

Though it might have seemed archaic by European standards, the Muscovite army was well adapted to steppe warfare. Above all it grew in size, until it could field up to 100,000 fighting men early in the seventeenth century. Its weaknesses were most apparent on the western front, but even here, Muscovy's mobilizational efforts were remarkably effective until the late 1570s. After that, the costs of the Livonian war escalated, Muscovite revenues declined, particularly in regions such as Novgorod, which had been devastated by the activities of Ivan's personal army, the *oprichnina*. Polish revenues increased after the 1569 Union of Lublin, and its alliance with Sweden in 1577. In 1576, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth acquired an energetic new king, Stephen Batory of Hungary (r. 1576–1586), while a massive Crimean attack on Moscow in 1571 forced Muscovy to divert troops from the Baltic to the southern frontiers.<sup>38</sup> In 1578, Swedish and Polish forces inflicted the first major defeats on Muscovite forces since the start of the Livonian war.

## MOBILIZING CASH AND COMMERCE

Muscovy's military failures were partly fiscal. The *pomest'e* system worked well where cash was scarce, but prolonged sieges and gunpowder warfare, the sort of warfare that dominated the Livonian war, required cash, and lots of it.<sup>39</sup> The government worked hard to raise more cash, but never seemed to have enough.

Muscovite governments raised cash through taxation and trade. A standardized general land tax was introduced for the first time in the 1520s, and levied according to the "big *sokha*," a unit of plowed land whose size varied according to the quality of the land. The land tax would remain the basic unit of Muscovite taxation until 1679. In the 1530s, during Ivan's minority, his mother, Elena Glinskaiia, unified the currency in different parts of the country.<sup>40</sup> This encouraged internal trade, and made it easier to commute taxes in kind to cash.

Some existing taxes were increased and new cash taxes were introduced. Tributes from furs and income from government monopolies on salt and alcohol sales began to make significant contributions to government revenues.

But without a port on the Baltic, Muscovy found it difficult to earn money from Europe's booming commerce. Indeed, that is what the Livonian war was largely about. The importance of trade with Europe was shown by the government's efforts to find alternative routes. In 1553, British merchants from the English Muscovy Company arrived in Moscow from the north, led by Richard Chancellor. Their arrival opened a new route for European trade through the port of Archangel, founded a year after their arrival. Archangel rapidly became as vital to Moscow's European trade as Astrakhan was for its trade with Persia and India. Archangel's new "window on the west" nicely balanced Astrakhan's "window on the south." From Archangel imported goods were carried down the Northern Dvina to Sol'-Vychegodsk, Velikii Ustiug, and Vologda, where merchants waited for winter before transporting them by sled through Iaroslavl' to Moscow.

For a century, the Archangel route reoriented Russia's European trade away from the Baltic. England imported furs and naval supplies (timber, hemp fiber for naval ropes, tallow, and tar), while Muscovy imported armaments, metals, woolen cloths, and luxury goods. Merchants of the Muscovy Company received substantial privileges until their expulsion in 1649 in retaliation for the execution of their own "tsar," Charles I. In the early days of the Archangel trade, they were exempt from customs dues and allowed to keep warehouses in Archangel, Kholmogory, Vologda, and Moscow. These rights were resented by Russian merchants, most of whom were engaged in trade to the Black Sea. However, despite the privileges enjoyed by English merchants, Dutch merchants had largely displaced them by 1600, creating a new channel for European cultural, economic, and technological influence.<sup>41</sup> In the early seventeenth century, Moscow imported most of its silver, armaments, cloth, and metal goods from Holland, in exchange for furs, timber, canvas, hemp, grain, leather, and foodstuffs such as honey and caviar.<sup>42</sup>

With trade restricted to such narrow channels, the revenues the government could raise through commerce were limited. That left internal taxation as the main source of government revenue. Stable, efficient, and cohesive rule might have raised enough revenue to finance even the long-running Livonian war. But Ivan failed to provide stable government as his rule became increasingly oppressive and unpredictable.

## ELITE DISCIPLINE AND UNITY

Ivan had inherited an exceptionally unified and disciplined political system. Since the fourteenth century, the culture of "autocracy" – the belief that unity under a single strong ruler was both right and in the interests of Moscow's elites – had sunk deep roots in Muscovite political culture. Those traditions help explain Muscovite expansion in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As Victor Lieberman points out, west of the Dniester and Vistula there

were in 1450 five to six hundred independent polities; and even in the late nineteenth century there were 25. In contrast, in “northeastern Europe, Siberia, and the Caucasus, over thirty city-states, princedoms, and khanates yielded to a single Russian imperial suzerainty.”<sup>43</sup>

However, during the latter part of Ivan’s reign there were many signs of a breakdown in elite unity, caused largely by Ivan’s increasingly unpredictable rule. Immediately after his coronation as Tsar, Ivan enjoyed immense authority, partly because the instability and weakness of the years of his minority reminded everyone of the dangers of political disunity. Rapid expansion and increasing wealth attracted high-ranking servitors from Muscovite princely families, but also from the ruling families of Lithuania and Kazan’ and principalities of the northern Caucasus.<sup>44</sup>

The church backed the Tsar’s autocratic authority. As the most important educational institution in the land, the church taught a wider public about the virtues of autocratic rule under an Orthodox (*pravoslavnyi*) Tsar. In a largely illiterate world, church architecture, the church’s public pronouncements, and its many ceremonies and pilgrimages provided a powerful sense of shared identity and purpose. Royal pilgrimages, public processions, the distribution of alms, and the founding of new religious institutions helped consolidate the image of the Tsar as a pious and powerful leader, as God’s representative on earth.<sup>45</sup> Unlike many rulers in the steppelands and Central Asia, Russia’s Tsars enjoyed both genealogical legitimacy and the support of institutionalized religion.

From 1542, a strong Metropolitan, Makarii, put his considerable authority behind the young Tsar. Ivan’s magnificent coronation, at the Kremlin’s Dormition cathedral in January 1547, was deliberately choreographed to raise the authority of a dynasty that had lost some of its luster during the long regency. Ivan assumed the title of Tsar (“Caesar”), which had normally been reserved for sovereign rulers such as the khans of the Golden Horde or the Byzantine emperor, or, in religious texts, for Christ, the Tsar of Heaven.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, the metaphorical potency of the title was demonstrated by the reluctance of European rulers to accept it. The *Imperial Book of Degrees* (“*Stepennaia kniga*”), prepared by members of the church, constructed a glorious, semi-divine pedigree for the royal dynasty. Later, in letters to his former friend, the boyar Andrei Kurbskii, who had fled to Lithuania, Ivan insisted passionately on his divine authority as Tsar.<sup>47</sup>

The culture of Muscovy’s elites was also remarkably homogeneous, much more so than that of the Polish nobility. “In Russia there was one law (the *sudebnik* of 1550), one currency, one religion, one set of weights and measures, one language, and a unified army command.”<sup>48</sup> At lower levels of society, cultural and religious homogeneity and widespread acceptance of autocratic rule generated early forms of nationalism that would provide a powerful cultural scaffolding for the Muscovite mobilizational machine. By 1600, Victor Lieberman argues, “Great Russian identity seems to have been rooted among townsmen, gentry, and sectors of the Muscovite peasantry.”<sup>49</sup>

These were great strengths. But the weakness of all autocracies, whether in the steppes or the agrarian lands, lay in their dependence on the personality

and skills of individual rulers. And though Ivan clearly had great intelligence and political skill, over time his rule became increasingly irrational.

In 1560, Ivan's wife Anastasia Romanovna died. The dangers of Ivan's childhood may already have encouraged a tendency to paranoia, but his wife's death brought it into the open. Ivan accused two of his leading reforming officials, Aleksei Adashev and the monk Sil'vestr, of having poisoned his wife. Both were tried, and Adashev would die in captivity, while several other close advisers were killed without a trial. In the next few years, as Ivan's behavior became more irrational several leading boyars fled to Lithuania, including his military commander and close friend, Andrei Kurbskii, who left in August 1564. Ivan became increasingly fearful and suspicious of his boyars.

In December 1564, Ivan suddenly left Moscow with his family and settled in Aleksandrovskaiia Sloboda, a fortified royal residence built by Vasili III, 60 miles north of Moscow. From here, Ivan sent his boyars and churchmen a long letter in which he threatened to abdicate if he was not given absolute power to punish his many enemies who, he claimed, had been shielded from just punishment. According to the chronicles, representatives of the common people begged church leaders to ask the Tsar "not to leave the country and deliver them to the wolves like unhappy sheep with no shepherd."<sup>50</sup> A large delegation of churchmen, boyars, officials, and common people set out for Aleksandrovskaiia Sloboda and begged Ivan not to abdicate. They also granted him the dangerous power to punish his enemies at his own discretion.

In February 1565, Ivan returned to Moscow and divided his kingdom into two separate realms. In one, the *oprichnina* (or the region "set apart"; the term was used of the portion of an estate set aside to support a widow), he would rule personally through a corps of several thousand personal followers, the *oprichniki*. Many, like the members of Chinggis Khan's *keshig*, were of non-noble birth. He left the rest of his lands, the *zemshchina*, to the boyars. The *oprichnina* included mainly lands in the north, well away from the frontiers, in regions that had flourished commercially in the early sixteenth century. He expelled most existing landowners from these regions, sometimes driving entire families from their homes in the middle of winter. The *oprichniki* swore to avoid all contact with the *zemshchina*, wore a special uniform of black, and carried whips, dog's heads, and brooms as signs of their willingness to bark at their enemies, bite them, and sweep them away.<sup>51</sup> Ivan built a special palace for the *oprichniki* in Moscow's Arbat district.

Several months later, church leaders, princes, and boyars protested at his increasingly arbitrary rule, telling the Tsar that "no Christian ruler had the right to treat human beings like animals; instead he should fear the righteous dooms of God, who avenges the blood of innocents unto the third generation."<sup>52</sup> In 1566, Ivan responded by summoning an "Assembly of the Land," or *Zemskii Sobor*, to discuss the Livonian war. The Assembly was a gathering of military servitors and clerics, and similar bodies would be summoned on several important occasions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Though the *Zemskii Sobor* has often been interpreted as a proto-Parliament, it is best seen as one more sign of Ivan's restless search for new allies. During

the 1566 Assembly of the Land, some 300 nobles petitioned the Tsar to end the *oprichnina*.<sup>53</sup> Ivan responded by arresting many members of the Assembly, and over the next few years he would kill several thousand members of the nobility, including his cousin, Vladimir of Staritsa, and the Metropolitan Philip. He had Novgorod sacked in 1570, and several thousand of its people were massacred. Finally, in 1572, after *oprichnina* forces failed to check a huge Crimean raid into Muscovy, Ivan abolished it.

Explaining the *oprichnina* has occupied historians ever since, and there is probably no rational explanation. The *oprichnina* was not the only strange episode of Ivan's reign. In 1575, he suddenly announced that one of his leading military commanders and his nephew by marriage, the baptized Tatar and Chinggisid Simeon Bekbulatovich, was now the grand prince of Rus', while Ivan remained Tsar of Kazan' and Astrakhan.<sup>54</sup> Ivan resumed power a year later, and it is clear that in practice he never surrendered real power. But explanations for this bizarre episode vary greatly. One possibility is that by putting a Chinggisid on the throne he was forestalling a possible plot to place the Crimean khan on the throne. Though raised as a Muslim, Simeon would end his life in 1616 as an Orthodox monk, after being forcibly tonsured 10 years earlier.

Other episodes illustrate Ivan's capacity for uncontrollable sadism and rage. A German translator in Muscovite service described the execution of Ivan's former chancellor, Ivan Viskovatyi, who had frequently warned Ivan not to shed innocent blood.

Making a sign with his hand the tyrant cried, "Seize him." They stripped him naked, passed a rope under his arms, tied him to a traverse beam, and let him hang there. ... Maliuta [Skuratov] ran up to the man as he hung from the beam, cut off his nose, and rode away on his horse; another darted up and cut off one of Ivan's ears, and then everyone in turn approached and cut off various parts of his body. Finally Ivan Reutov, one of the tyrant's clerks, cut off the man's genitals and the poor wretch expired on the spot. ... The body of Ivan Mikhailovich was cut down and laid on the ground; the retainers cut off the head, which had neither nose nor ears, and hacked the rest of it to pieces.<sup>55</sup>

Several Soviet historians argued that the *oprichnina* represented a systematic restructuring of the nobility, in which boyars were demoted and new men elevated to power. These arguments work well during the early period of the *oprichnina*, but not for the entire period, during which the boyar class suffered little more than other members of the Muscovite elite. What seems to have happened is that Ivan's increasing paranoia encouraged him to push the logic of autocratic rule to dangerous extremes. Brutal ways of enforcing elite discipline were a vital part of autocratic rule, as later rulers would demonstrate, including Peter I and Stalin. But Ivan IV crossed a threshold beyond which erratic and violent behavior at the center began to weaken the entire mobilization system, by breaking many of the links through which power was transmitted to the peripheries.

## OVER-MOBILIZATION AND A SYSTEM UNDER STRESS

As the system began to unravel, Ivan drove it harder. When the Livonian war got bogged down, the government increased its demands on the servitor class, who put more pressure on their peasants. Between 1536 and 1545 taxes may have risen 55 percent, then another 286 percent between 1552 and 1556, then 60 percent in the 1560s and another 41 percent in the 1570s.<sup>56</sup> The *oprichnina* exacerbated the problem because many *oprichniki*, aware that their privileges would not last, exploited their peasants cruelly and unsustainably. A German, Heinrich von Staden, who served as an *oprichnik*, claimed that many *oprichniki* collected as much in a year from their peasants as had previously been collected over 10 years.<sup>57</sup> Peasants fled to unoccupied lands or to less predatory landlords.

By the end of Ivan's reign, whole provinces had been depopulated and could no longer support their *pomeschiki*. This threatened the entire system of military mobilization. In Novgorod, in 1500, almost three quarters of all mobilized servitors presented themselves with mounted servants; in the 1570s, only one in five could bring mounted servants. In rural areas near Moscow and Novgorod, populations may have declined by 80 percent or more, and in many regions three-field crop rotations ceased.<sup>58</sup> Depopulation reduced government revenues and left *pomeschiki* without the servants, resources, and equipment they needed to serve in the army. In 1581, in a desperate attempt to check peasant flight, the government banned all peasant migrations for a year, by revoking the traditional right to move around St. George's Day (November 26). This temporary law proved an ominous early step towards permanent enserfment of the Russian peasantry.

The Muscovite system, built up so painfully since the late thirteenth century, came close to collapse. The English traveler Giles Fletcher, whose account of Muscovy was published in 1591, wrote of Ivan IV that

[His] wicked policy and tyrannous practise ... hath so troubled that countrey, and filled it so full of grudge and mortall hatred ever since, that it will not be quenched (as it seemeth now) till it burne againe into a civill flame. ... the people of the most part ... wishe for some forreine invasion, which they suppose to bee the only meanes, to rid them of the heavy yoke of this tyrannous government.<sup>59</sup>

Curiously, the near collapse of the system also demonstrated its resilience. Despite everything, including several years of famine, civil war, and foreign invasion, the system kept working, though with diminished power, for two decades after Ivan's death in 1584. In 1582, Ivan signed a humiliating truce with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, surrendering his gains in Livonia. In the years that followed, despite the extinguishing of the royal dynasty and an uncertain succession, the government shifted troops to its southern borders, crushed major uprisings in Kazan' province, built much of a new defensive line south of the Oka line, and built new forts in Kazan' province, in Bashkiria, and at key points along the Volga, including Samara (1586), Tsaritsyn, and Saratov. In 1598, so well established were the new defensive lines to the south

that the government abandoned the Oka line entirely.<sup>60</sup> Like a piece of sturdy machinery in need of major repairs, the Muscovite mobilizational system kept generating just enough power to protect Moscow's borders until, early in the seventeenth century, it finally broke down.

## NOTES

- 1 Ágoston, "Ottoman Warfare in Europe," 130.
- 2 Ágoston, "Ottoman Warfare in Europe," 130–131.
- 3 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 7.
- 4 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 3.
- 5 Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 73.
- 6 Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 34.
- 7 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 33.
- 8 Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 65.
- 9 Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 156.
- 10 Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 56, 59.
- 11 Davies, "Muscovy at War and Peace," 486.
- 12 Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 394–395.
- 13 Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8. There has been a revival of interest in the idea of empire among historians; other relevant works include Lieven, *Empire*, and Darwin, *After Tamerlane*.
- 14 See Huttenbach, "Muscovy's Conquest"; on the two-centuries-long conquest of Bashkiria, see Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*.
- 15 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 13.
- 16 Dale, *Indian Merchants*, 84.
- 17 On Astrakhan's role in Muscovite trade see Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 31.
- 18 There's a good short summary of the history of these lines in Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, 261–267, and in Shaw, "Southern Frontiers of Muscovy."
- 19 See Moon, "Peasant Migration" and *The Russian Peasantry*.
- 20 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 17.
- 21 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 20–24.
- 22 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 13.
- 23 Cited in Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 18–19.
- 24 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 19–20.
- 25 Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 16, and map on 17.
- 26 Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 24.
- 27 Shaw, "Southern Frontiers of Muscovy," 125.
- 28 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 223.
- 29 As Poe points out in "*A People Born to Slavery*," 129, this war really marks the beginning of serious European-wide interest in Muscovy; but most of that interest was hostile.
- 30 Kollmann, "Muscovite Russia," 47; but Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 28, gives 80,000 cavalymen; he argues that in the late seventeenth century, there may have been 200,000 members of the "service elite."
- 31 Kollmann, "Muscovite Russia," 37.
- 32 Davies, "Development of Russian Military Power," 152ff.
- 33 Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 30.
- 34 Stevens, *Soldiers on the Steppe*, 16.

- 35 This point is made clearly in Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 160–161: he adds that traces of it survived into the eighteenth century “embodied by the active field army on the one hand and the Ukrainian land militia on the other,” 161.
- 36 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 158; and *Warfare, State and Society*, 52.
- 37 Wilson, *Muscovy Through Foreign Eyes*, 28–29.
- 38 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 158.
- 39 Zlotnik, “Muscovite Fiscal Policy,” on the monetization of Muscovite government.
- 40 Bogatyrev, “Ivan IV,” 253.
- 41 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 19 (on trade with the Black Sea), 35.
- 42 Dale, *Indian Merchants*, 78–84.
- 43 Lieberman, “Transcending East–West Dichotomies,” 29.
- 44 Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, 9–10.
- 45 Kollmann, “Muscovite Russia,” 56–58, is good on mobilization through the church and through visible rituals.
- 46 Bogatyrev, “Ivan IV,” 245.
- 47 Edward Keenan has argued that Ivan’s correspondence with Prince Kurbskii is a seventeenth-century forgery, but most scholars accept that much of it is authentic; see Kollmann, “Muscovite Russia,” 61, and Bogatyrev, “Ivan IV,” 249; see also Keenan, *The Kurbskii–Groznyi Apocrypha*, Charles Halperin’s review article, “Edward Keenan and the Kurbskii–Groznyi Correspondence in Hindsight,” and Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 158–173.
- 48 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 369.
- 49 Lieberman, “Transcending East–West Dichotomies,” 44.
- 50 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 177.
- 51 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 183.
- 52 Cited in Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 193.
- 53 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 206ff. As Poe points out, the term *Zemskii Sobor* is anachronistic, having been coined in the mid-nineteenth century by the Slavophile intellectual Konstantin Aksakov; Poe, “The Central Government,” 460–461.
- 54 Ostrowski, “Simeon Bekbulatovich,” 27ff.
- 55 Schlichting, cited in Poe, “*A People Born to Slavery*,” 107–108.
- 56 Kollmann, “Muscovite Russia,” 53.
- 57 Cited in Hellie, “Russia, 1200–1815,” 486.
- 58 Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 58; Hellie, “The Peasantry,” 294.
- 59 Cited in Poe, “*A People Born to Slavery*,” 161.
- 60 On the above, see Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 122–125.

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[7] *1600–1750: A TIPPING POINT:  
BUILDING A RUSSIAN EMPIRE*

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*GLOBAL PROCESSES AND IMPACTS: THE LITTLE ICE  
AGE AND GLOBALIZATION*

The history of the seventeenth century was shaped by a thickening network of global connections, and by the climatic changes of the Little Ice Age.

In much of the world, climates were unusually chilly between *c.*1570 and the 1730s.<sup>1</sup> Climate change was driven in part by the orbital cycles of the earth known as the Milankovic cycles. But human activities may have exacerbated climate change. European diseases decimated the major population centers of the Americas in terrible “virgin soil” epidemics during the early sixteenth century. Formerly arable lands became forests again, and increased forest cover may have reduced global CO<sub>2</sub> levels enough to lower global temperatures.<sup>2</sup> In much of Outer Eurasia, chillier climates disrupted the climate patterns on which farmers depended. Geoffrey Parker and others have linked deteriorating climates to the “Seventeenth-Century Crisis,” a series of economic, political, religious, and epidemiological crises that affected much of Outer Eurasia.

In Inner Eurasia, the data are not yet fine-grained enough to yield clear conclusions about the links between regional climate changes and broader historical changes. But there are hints that climate change took different forms here because, as we have seen, both temperature and humidity may have increased in the steppelands during the Little Ice Age.<sup>3</sup> This could explain the continued power of nomadic confederations in the Pontic steppes, the Kazakh steppes, and both eastern and western Mongolia in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as grasslands and livestock flourished with warmer and wetter climates. It may also explain why Inner Eurasia avoided the worst of the seventeenth-century crisis. Climate change certainly affected agrarian societies in northern and northwestern Inner Eurasia, threatening supplies of food, labor, and livestock. In Muscovy, evidence from tree-rings and other natural

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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sources suggests that between 1650 and 1680 winters were colder than at any other time in the last half millennium.<sup>4</sup> Yet in Inner Eurasia as a whole, we can rarely catch climate change red-handed as a major driver of change. Indeed, Muscovy suffered its most serious political, economic, and demographic crisis at the beginning of the century, 50 years earlier than the major crises of Outer Eurasia.<sup>5</sup> Muscovy's seventeenth century was an era of increasing resources and growing military and political power. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, on the border between European Outer Eurasia and western Inner Eurasia, suffered much more. Indeed, the seventeenth century marked the beginning of the end for the Commonwealth. In 1600, the Commonwealth was a European superpower. By 1700 it looked like a client state of Muscovy.

The impact of globalization is clearer than that of climate change because globalization increased the scale and reach of inter-imperial commercial, political, and military rivalries. Within the first global exchange networks created in the sixteenth century, empires, states, and corporations competed with growing intensity and over larger areas for land, people, innovations, resources, and profits. Governments, nobles, and merchants invested in the search for new lands and new sources of wealth, both within and beyond their borders. They encouraged peasants to settle under-utilized borderlands, and adventurers to seek new sources of fish or furs or gold or silver. John Richards has described the impact of this global mobilization effort on global environments, while Victor Lieberman and his colleagues have shown how similar were the techniques used by governments throughout Eurasia as they intensified and diversified their mobilizational efforts.<sup>6</sup>

Taken together, these efforts amounted to a global speedup, an intensified mobilizational effort across much of the world that transformed both agrarian societies and the non-agrarian lands beyond their borders. In the two or three centuries before the Industrial Revolution, agriculture spread faster than ever before, driven by population growth and the increasing scale and intensity of commercial, political, and military competition. In 1400, global croplands covered 180 million hectares of the earth's land surface; by 1700 they accounted for 296 million hectares (a 165 percent increase); and by 1850 for 540 million hectares (a further increase of 180 percent, for a total increase over 450 years of 300 percent).<sup>7</sup> The mobilizational speedup had its greatest impact in regions such as the Americas or Inner Eurasia, where agriculture had made limited progress. In Inner Eurasia, the spread of agriculture buoyed agrarian polities such as Muscovy. In the east, it supported population growth in China, and China's growing wealth encouraged expansion into eastern Inner Eurasia.

In the century and a half discussed in this chapter, the mobilizational speedup would transform relations between agrarian and pastoralist regions of Inner Eurasia. Hegemonic agrarian empires appeared at the western and eastern ends of Inner Eurasia, squeezing the ancient societies caught between them. This is why the seventeenth century counts as a tipping point in the history of Inner Eurasia. In 1600, there was no single hegemonic power in Inner Eurasia. By 1750, the geopolitics of Inner Eurasia had been transformed. In 1700 Muscovy controlled almost 15 million sq. kilometers, or three times the area it had controlled in 1600, mainly because it now ruled most of Siberia.<sup>8</sup>

Peter the Great renamed Muscovy the “Russian Empire” (*Rossiiskaia Imperiia*), and when he died, in 1725, the empire dominated western and northern Inner Eurasia. In the 1760s, for the first time, the population of the Russian Empire exceeded that of any other European state.<sup>9</sup> Its only serious rival within Inner Eurasia was the Qing Empire, which now controlled the eastern steppelands of Mongolia and Xinjiang, after defeating the last great pastoralist empire, that of the Oirat or Zunghars. That victory (described in Chapter 8) ended a contest between agrarian and pastoralist societies that had lasted for almost 2,000 years. It marks the end of the traditional Inner Eurasian *smychka*.

The balance of power between agrarian and pastoralist mobilizational systems tipped so fast because agrarian polities had opportunities for growth that were not available to polities in the steppes or Central Asia. As the balance of demographic, economic, and military power turned against them, pastoralists found it harder to exact resources from agrarian regions or even to defend their home territories. Relative economic, demographic, and technological stagnation in the steppes and Central Asia threw into high relief the increasing dynamism of Muscovy/Russia and Qing China.

This chapter will focus, first, on the breakdown of the Muscovite mobilization machine early in the seventeenth century, and then on its renovation and expansion in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Chapter 8 will discuss changes in other parts of Inner Eurasia during the period from 1600–1750.

## *BREAKDOWN AND RECOVERY OF THE MUSCOVITE MOBILIZATION MACHINE*

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was by no means certain that Muscovy would emerge as a hegemonic power. In 1598, the death of Ivan IV’s son, Fedor I, ended the Rurikid dynasty. Within a few years, the Muscovite mobilizational machine broke down during the “Time of Troubles.”<sup>10</sup> But it was repaired surprisingly fast, then renovated and improved during the seventeenth century until, by the early eighteenth century, it dominated western Inner Eurasia and ruled, in addition, the northern lands of Siberia, from Europe to the Pacific.

### **BREAKDOWN: THE TIME OF TROUBLES, 1598–1613**

During the Time of Troubles, between 1598 and 1613, the Muscovite mobilizational machine could no longer tax effectively, build viable armies, or bind elites together. It also lost much of the population that supplied its labor and resources. By some estimates, the population of Muscovy fell by 50 percent, though 25 percent sounds more likely.<sup>11</sup> For the historian, the breakdown provides an X-ray of the system’s weak points, showing how fast the system could break down when leadership failed, reducing mobilizational pressure, and encouraging explosive challenges from below.

Ivan IV died in 1584. He had killed his son and heir, Ivan, in 1581, apparently in a drunken brawl. His second son and successor, Fedor I, lacked his father's intelligence, toughness, and charisma. As during Ivan's minority, weakness at the center encouraged conflicts between leading boyar clans. Fedor's brother-in-law, Boris Godunov, whose career had blossomed under the *oprichnina*, emerged as the effective ruler. Soon he was playing a role similar to that of the *beglerbegi* or emirs who had ruled so often in the Muslim world as marriage allies of Chinggisid puppets.

Godunov understood the crisis he faced. Peasants fled extortionate landlords. Revenues fell. And many *pomeshchiki* were too impoverished to buy the equipment they needed to serve in the army. Godunov tackled these problems with energy and skill, but the challenges were extraordinarily complex, and he lacked the authority of a legitimate Tsar. Like many non-Chinggisid leaders in the steppes and Central Asia, he understood the value of alliances with religious leaders. In 1589, while he was still regent, he established the new institution of Patriarch. Church leaders returned the favor by supporting his election as Tsar in 1598. To check peasant flight, he reduced taxes. To help the *pomeshchik* class, he decreed in 1597 that peasants who had fled without permission could be forcibly returned to their landlords for up to five years. To modernize the army and government, he recruited foreign military specialists, encouraged officials and nobles to educate their sons in Europe, and considered establishing schools offering a European education.<sup>12</sup>

Nothing helped, and as the mobilizational machine broke down, Muscovy itself became vulnerable. The Crimean khanate began to launch almost annual raids, and in 1591 a Crimean army nearly reached Moscow. Fighting flared with Sweden in 1590, over trade through Livonia. In 1598, Fedor died without an heir, ending the Rurikid dynasty, which had ruled much of Rus' since the ninth century. Fedor's younger brother, Dmitrii, had died in 1591 on his estate at Uglich, under circumstances that were confused enough to embolden a series of dynastic challenges by pretenders, claiming to be a still-alive Dmitrii. Many professed to believe them, despite an official enquiry which found that Dmitrii had accidentally stabbed himself during an epileptic fit.

Like the death of Khan Berdibek of the Golden Horde in 1359, the end of the ruling dynasty unleashed violent contests for the throne. After complex maneuvers within the small boyar elite, Godunov was crowned Tsar in September 1598. Famine and social breakdown magnified the crisis he faced. In 1601 and 1602, there were catastrophic crop failures, caused by early spring frosts and excessive summer rainfall.<sup>13</sup> The government reacted energetically, but could do little. Huge numbers took to the road, forming a large vagrant population of potential rebels. Many died of starvation.

In 1604, a motley army of Poles, Russians, and Cossacks attacked from the south-west. It was led by Grigorii Otrepev, an impoverished young noble and the first of several false Dmitriis. The extraordinary support he received indicates the depth of popular discontent, and the vulnerability of a Tsar who, though able, was not a Rurikid. Godunov died suddenly in April 1605, leaving no obvious successor. The only claimant with any pretensions to legitimacy was the pretender, who assumed the throne, only to be murdered in May 1606

because his close ties to Catholic Poland had alienated his Russian Orthodox followers. His successor, the prominent boyar Vasiliï Shuiskii, survived a massive revolt led by a former slave, Ivan Bolotnikov, and an invasion by a new false Dmitrii. But he survived only with the support of Polish troops. After trying to gain the support of Swedish troops as well, Shuiskii was forced to abdicate in July 1610.

Now the system finally collapsed. A group of boyars tried to arrange for a Polish successor, either Prince Wladyslaw or his father, Sigismund III. But anti-Catholic feeling, encouraged by the patriotic pronouncements of the Orthodox Patriarch Hermogen, and the collapse of the second false Dmitrii, prompted the emergence of a remarkable anti-Polish “national” army in 1611. Its base was in the provincial towns, and its most prominent leaders were town commanders (*gorodovye vоеvody*), led by Prokopii Liapunov from Riazan’ and Dmitrii Pozharskii from Zraisk, as well as Kuzma Minin, a merchant from Nizhnii Novgorod and a close ally of Pozharskii. Like the many displays of loyalty to Vasiliï II during the civil wars of the early fifteenth century, the events of this period show how deeply traditions of elite unity and discipline had penetrated lower levels of Muscovy’s mobilizational machine, and the extent to which those traditions depended on a sense of dynastic legitimacy. Elected officials from Vologda and other northern regions had begun raising local militias as early as 1608. Eventually, Pozharskii organized a coalition of local militias, boyar leaders, and Cossacks. With a weakened central government, “only the town commandants possessed the breadth of authority, the military experience and the local bureaucratic machinery necessary to defeat the tsar’s enemies and re-establish the autocracy.”<sup>14</sup>

Pozharskii’s improvised army captured Moscow in 1612, and its leaders summoned an Assembly of the Land or *Zemskii Sobor*. In February 1613, the Assembly elected Mikhail Romanov as the new Tsar. Though not Rurikids, the Romanovs were related to Ivan IV through Ivan’s marriage to Anastasia Romanovna. Mikhail Romanov came to Moscow from Kostroma and was crowned Tsar in July 1613. The senior member of the Romanov clan was the influential Metropolitan Filaret (d. 1633), a cousin to Tsar Fedor, and father to Mikhail. Filaret himself could not be crowned because Boris Godunov had forced him to become a monk, but for several years after his return from Polish captivity in 1619 he would be Russia’s de facto ruler and the main adviser to his son, the new Tsar. From 1613 to 1917, Romanov lineage, through descent or marriage, would grant legitimacy to rulers of Muscovy and the Russian Empire, just as Chinggisid lineage had granted legitimacy to steppeland rulers in the centuries after the fall of the Mongol Empire.

## RECOVERY

Over the next few decades, the Muscovite mobilizational machine was repaired, rebuilt, and modernized. The speed of recovery shows how deeply Muscovite elites and even middle-rank servitors and merchants were committed to the autocratic political culture that had evolved since the fourteenth century. Nancy Kollmann writes:



Perhaps the best indicator that the Muscovite rulers had managed to increase cohesion in their realm by the end of the sixteenth century was the fact that disparate forces – service tenure landholders from the center, Cossacks of the steppe frontier, communes of the north – mobilized in the Time of Troubles to rescue the state from foreign invasion. Moscow’s rulers had at least consolidated an élite sufficiently cohesive to hold the state together.<sup>15</sup>

Even the successes of pretenders during the Time of Troubles illustrate a widespread commitment to legitimate autocratic Tsars.

The revival of royal power also owed something to the extent of the breakdown. For all levels of Muscovite society, from the peasantry to the boyars, the Time of Troubles seemed to confirm the Hobbesian principle that autocracy was the only alternative to anarchy, foreign conquest, and ruin, a principle that had seemed self-evident in Rus’ since Batu’s conquest four centuries earlier. “[I]t is manifest,” writes Hobbes in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, “that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.” Forty years before Hobbes wrote his great book, leaders of the Muscovite national army of 1612 told their followers:

And you, sirs, should take counsel together with all the people, mindful of God and of our faith, lest we remain without a sovereign in these times of utter ruin, ... [and] lest the Muscovite state be utterly destroyed by such calamities. You know yourselves, sirs: how can we defend ourselves now, without a sovereign, against our common enemies, the Poles and Lithuanians, and Germans [Swedes], and the Russian rogues who are renewing bloody strife in the state? How can we, without a sovereign, negotiate with neighbouring sovereigns about great matters of the state and of the land? And how can our realm stand firm and unshakeable henceforth?<sup>16</sup>

Particularly striking is the support for autocracy at lower levels of Muscovite society. Support was strong amongst townspeople and lesser servitors, groups whose critical role in the Muscovite mobilizational system is often hard to see, even though the *pomest’*e system had increased their military role, and the local government reforms of Ivan IV had increased their role in tax collection and the administration of justice. Among these groups, there already existed sentiments close to modern nationalism, at least in the Orthodox and Slavic-speaking heartland of Muscovy. That mood could take xenophobic forms, as in the appeals of Patriarch Hermogen, who spoke out in 1610 and 1611 against the danger of a Catholic and Polish Tsar. Some of the rhetoric of peasant rebels, or the religious dissenters who appeared after the religious schism of the mid-seventeenth century, suggests that even many peasants shared feelings close to modern nationalism.<sup>17</sup> Writing in the middle of the century, during England’s civil wars, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich’s English doctor, Samuel Collins, noted the cultural homogeneity that cemented these early forms of popular nationalism.

The mode [*sic*] of men and women, rich and poor, are all one, all over the Empire, from the highest to the lowest, and their Language one, ye and Religion too, which certainly must hugely tend to their peace and preservation.<sup>18</sup>

No one imagined any real alternative to autocracy. In contrast to England's experience during its own time of troubles in the middle of the century, no one offered any alternative vision of how power might be managed or rights and homes protected.<sup>19</sup>

The first task facing Mikhail Romanov and his advisers was to expel foreign armies. Assemblies of the Land met several times in the early years of Mikhail's reign and helped mobilize the necessary taxes and troops. Under a truce negotiated with Sweden in February 1617, Muscovy abandoned its last outlet on the Baltic, *Izborskaia zemlia*, a small coastal strip near the outlet of the Neva river that had offered a meagre outlet to the Baltic since the Middle Ages. A year later, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth agreed to a truce under which Moscow ceded control of Chernigov and Smolensk, and even conceded the legitimacy of Polish claims to the throne of Moscow.

Metropolitan Filaret returned from Polish exile in 1619, and helped re-establish order and rebuild the machinery of fiscal and military mobilization. The apparatus of central government began to expand beyond the royal household and the capital. The number of government bureaux or *prikazy* increased from more than 30 in 1610 to almost 70 in 1630. In 1619, the government undertook a census. It sent surveyors and inspectors to the major towns to list the resources held in granaries and treasuries, to revise lists of taxpayers, and to record local landholdings. Eventually, such surveys would reduce the need for a consultative body such as the Assemblies of the Land. Indeed, Davies argues that the government ceased to call Assemblies after 1683 because it now received all the information it needed from its town officials, the *voevody*.<sup>20</sup>

As in the fourteenth century, dynastic continuity allowed political stability. Mikhail Romanov ruled for a third of a century, until his death in 1645. His son, Alexei Mikhailovich, also ruled for a third of a century, until his death in 1676. There followed a 20-year period of dynastic instability, but there was no breakdown. Alexei Mikhailovich's heir, Fedor, was crowned as a minor, but his elder sister Sophia acted as regent until his death in 1682. Sophia then ruled as regent for Fedor's brother, Ivan, and Ivan's younger half-brother, Peter, until Sophia was overthrown in 1689. Peter, Alexei Mikhailovich's son by his second wife, Natalia Naryshkina, became sole Tsar after Ivan's death in 1696. During Peter's reign the autocracy and the mobilizational machine it managed became more powerful than ever before. Indeed, so powerful was the system now that it was not destabilized even by the lack of a clear successor to Peter after the death of his son, Alexei, in 1718, as a result of beatings received during a trial for treason.<sup>21</sup>

## *RENOVATING THE MOBILIZATION MACHINE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

Traditionally, Russian historiography has seen Peter the Great as the founder of modern Russian autocracy and the expanding empire over which the autocracy presided. In fact, most of the crucial renovations were undertaken in the

seventeenth century. Peter completed, consolidated, and built on improvements introduced since the Time of Troubles.

Renovations in the seventeenth century took three main forms: (1) military reforms; (2) economic and fiscal mobilization; and (3) the rebuilding of a unified elite.

## MILITARY MOBILIZATION

Armies are the engines of mobilizational systems and warfare the ultimate test of their effectiveness. So building a successful modernized version of the agrarian *smychka* meant mobilizing large, powerful armies from peasants and the resources they produced, and importing the most modern military technologies and skills. William Fuller writes:

It is difficult to exaggerate the centrality of the army to the history of the Russian Empire. After all, it was due to the army that the empire came into existence in the first place. It was the army that conquered the territories of the empire, defended them, policed them and maintained internal security all at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

As in the past, the challenge was to form armies that could operate both in the steppes and on the western frontiers, where they would need cannon, siege trains, and large infantry forces. But Muscovy's two frontiers were always closely linked, and they shared resources, men, and mobilizational strategies.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, as the power of steppeland armies declined, and gunpowder armies grew and evolved, Muscovy's western frontiers would take up more of the time, resources, and energy of the renovated autocracy. And the differences between the two frontiers did matter. For example, European gunpowder armies were customarily organized in lines that concentrated firepower and could be maneuvered easily. Yet in the more mobile warfare of the steppes, lines could be circled and attacked from behind, so Russian forces had to protect all sides. To do so, they often advanced in squares, behind the mobile wooden walls of a *guliai-gorod* or walking fortress.<sup>24</sup>

In the south-west, Muscovy faced a new enemy, the Ottoman Empire, whose armies were also familiar with two types of frontier. Ottoman armies combined infantry and cavalry units, and were even larger than those of Muscovy. Finesse, tactics, strategy, but above all efficient provisioning and supply systems really mattered here. Indeed, Fuller argues that on the Turkish frontier, Russian armies developed styles of fighting that would later be seen as quintessentially Russian. Their main elements included coordinated fire from infantry troops and mobile cannon, as well as the ability to maneuver in unexpected ways and attack fast and violently.<sup>25</sup> But improvisation counted, too. Peter the Great countered Swedish cavalry charges simply by equipping his soldiers with spades so they could dig ditches:

such humble instruments as the spade, the pike, and the ax were at least as valuable, if not more valuable, to Peter's soldiers as the musket. The Russian peasant may not have known how to shoot, but he did know how to dig, hack, and stab.

Peter's decision to deploy his infantry behind defensive fortifications thus made excellent sense.<sup>26</sup>

As the importance of the western military frontier grew, Muscovy devoted more attention and resources to building infantry armies with gunpowder weapons, and this huge military project would drive many different types of change.

The government imported many of the officers, skills, and weapons it needed from abroad. In an attempt to retake Smolensk, in 1632, Filaret formed large numbers of foreign or “new formation” units. Though their rank-and-file soldiers were mostly Russian, they were commanded by 2,500 specially hired foreign officers, such as the Scottish mercenary Alexander Leslie. At Smolensk, new formation units made up more than half of the 34,000 Muscovite troops. Though they performed well, the siege failed because of strategic blunders and devastating Tatar raids through a southern frontier weakened by the redeployment of troops away from Muscovy's southern defensive lines.<sup>27</sup> The new units were also expensive, so most were disbanded after the war, though some were hired for service on the new Belgorod fortified line.

When the 13 years' war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth began in 1654, after the Khmel'nitskii rebellion in Ukraine, new formation troops made up most of the active army.<sup>28</sup> Moscow won the war mainly because of a massive mobilizational effort. The number of soldiers rose from 40,000 to well over 100,000 at the war's end, after a mobilizational effort that few other states could match. By now, new formation units in the European style had largely replaced the traditional levies of cavalrymen.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the century, Muscovy could field armies of more than 200,000, most organized in new formation units.<sup>30</sup>

The new armies were very expensive, so economic and financial mobilization was critical. Unlike *pomeshchiki*, foreign soldiers had to be paid in cash and supplied with weapons and equipment.<sup>31</sup> Some money was saved by recruiting and training Russian nobles (for the officer corps) and peasants (for the ordinary infantry). But in the new formation units, even Russian soldiers and officers had to be supplied with uniforms, equipment, and food. Scattered populations and low productivity made it impossible to support infantry armies on the march, so new formation armies also needed huge and expensive baggage trains. Their horses and oxen usually consumed more food than their soldiers, and slowed the army to the pace of the slowest oxen.<sup>32</sup>

New formation soldiers also needed modern arms and equipment. Seventeenth-century Muscovy had little domestic iron (apart from low-grade “swamp ore”), and it lacked saltpeter and sulfur for making gunpowder. So it had to buy weapons and materials from abroad. Some came from England through Archangel, but from the 1620s, increasing amounts came from Holland, in exchange for Russian grain.<sup>33</sup> Copper came mainly from Sweden, an unreliable source given the regular wars between the two countries. The Muscovite government actively sought cheaper and more dependable sources for these strategic resources, and in the 1630s it began to produce iron in the Urals, while in 1632 it established new weapons factories in Tula, with the help of

a Dutch entrepreneur, Andries Winius. In this way, military needs generated Russia's first modern industries.<sup>34</sup>

## SERFDOM, AND FISCAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION

Muscovy's increasing military power depended less on training or tactics than on its ability to mobilize more men and resources. Victory meant being able

to provision one's forces through a long siege, ... to overwhelm the enemy with masses of light cavalry. ... And above all ... to recover from enormous losses and resume the campaign. It was only in regard to this last that Muscovy's investment in foreign formation infantry was finally vindicated, for through peasant conscription on a great scale the infantry regiments could be rebuilt more easily than the old middle service class cavalry units.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the old cavalry armies of *pomeshchiki*, the new infantry formations allowed Muscovy to convert large peasant populations directly into large armies.

The contrast with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is striking. The Commonwealth's rulers tried as hard as Moscow's Tsars to modernize their armies. Wladyslaw IV (1632–1648), Jan Kazimierz (1648–1668), and Jan Sobieski (1674–1696) all created "new formation" armies and introduced new ways of levying peasant recruits, while Polish artillery and cavalry were of very high quality.<sup>36</sup> The crucial difference was in the amount of men, money, and resources that could be mobilized. That difference reflected not only on Muscovy's territorial gains but also on the unity and determination of its governments and the increasing mobilizational pressure they could exert. In contrast, in his southern campaigns after 1684 and 1692, Jan Sobieski commanded armies that were far too small. This was hardly surprising, as royal revenues had barely grown in a century. By 1697, arrears of pay amounted to 10 times the annual revenues of the Commonwealth. The *Sejm* was reluctant to increase royal revenues, which were falling as the Commonwealth lost territory and the grain trade with Europe declined. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Khmel'nitskii rebellion in Ukraine and wars with Muscovy and Sweden reduced the population of the Commonwealth from 11 million to almost 8 million. By the early eighteenth century its population was under 7 million.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, Muscovy's territory and population increased until its human resources began to equal those of the major European states. In the sixteenth century, Muscovy and the Commonwealth both had populations of about 6–7 million.<sup>38</sup> By the middle of the seventeenth century, the population of the Commonwealth had risen to about 11 million, and here it stayed for much of the next century. By 1678, Muscovy had a population of about 10.5 million, and by 1719 a population of 15.5 million. According to Vodarskii, the peasant population of Muscovy grew from 9.6 million to 13 million between 1678 and 1719.<sup>39</sup> More peasants meant more produce, which may explain why grain prices did not rise during the seventeenth century as grain production kept pace with population growth.<sup>40</sup>

Why did Muscovy's population increase? From the 1620s, political stability and less predatory fiscal policies allowed populations to rebound from the calamities of Ivan's reign and the Time of Troubles. But most important of all was the increase in territory, above all the absorption of left-bank Ukraine and advances into the Pontic steppes. Some of the land incorporated within Muscovy's expanding borders was very fertile. Muscovy's central Black Earth and Mid-Volga regions offered an ideal combination of fertile land, adequate moisture, and plenty of sunlight. Further south, aridity was an increasing problem that would be exacerbated by deforestation as peasants cleared land for farming, particularly along watercourses.<sup>41</sup> There is little evidence of technological improvements, but peasants did adapt to new environments. Most growth was extensive rather than intensive, and for extensive growth, the fundamental requirement was government protection along underpopulated borderlands. This the Muscovite government could provide, as it extended its lines of frontier forts. (See "Expansion into the Pontic steppes," below.)

Internal stability and a growing bureaucracy allowed the government to mobilize its human resources with increasing efficiency. The institutions described, collectively, as "serfdom" played a crucial role in this mobilizational drive. Even in the sixteenth century, the *pomest'e* system obliged governments to take care that peasants would keep supplying their military landlords with labor and produce. From the late sixteenth century, governments began to protect *pomeshchiki* by limiting the right of peasants to move. Just as a strong casing allows a piston to exert more pressure, so, too, restrictions on peasant movement increased the fiscal pressure that landlords and governments could exert on the peasantry. Here is one more illustration of the fundamental rule that in Inner Eurasia, control over labor was generally more important than property rights over land, because land was more abundant. "Labor was the scarce factor of production, and the nobility could be supported only by preventing the peasants from fleeing."<sup>42</sup>

Traditionally, peasants had been allowed to leave their landlords around St. George's Day, November 26, just after the harvest. Legislative action to limit peasant mobility began with a 1581 law temporarily prohibiting all peasants from leaving their landlords even on St. George's Day. In the decades that followed, similar temporary bans were reintroduced until finally, in the law code or *Ulozhenie* of 1649, the ban on movement was made permanent and retrospective. According to article 9 of Ch. XI of the 1649 Law Code or *Ulozhenie*, servitors could recapture any serfs who had fled their lands:

And whatever peasants and *bobyli* [poor peasants] are listed with any [landowner] in the census books of the previous years of [1646 and 1647], and who subsequent to these census books have fled, or shall henceforth flee, from those men with whom they are listed in the census books: those fugitive peasants and *bobyli*, and their brothers, children, nephews, and grandchildren with their wives and with their children and with all their possessions, and with their harvested and unharvested grain, shall be returned from flight to those men from whom they fled, in accordance with the census books, without time limit; and henceforth under no circumstances should anyone receive peasants who are not his and keep them with him.<sup>43</sup>

This provision bound serfs to their masters, theoretically in perpetuity. But it also bound their masters to the central government, because only the central government had the resources needed to enforce such laws. The nineteenth-century historian S. M. Soloviev described the process vividly:

The chase after human beings, after working hands, was carried out throughout the Muscovite state on a vast scale. Hunted were city people who ran away from *tiaglo* [tax obligations] wherever they only could, by concealing themselves, bonding themselves [as slaves], enrolling in the ranks of lower grade clerks. Hunted were peasants who, burdened with heavy taxes, roamed individually and in droves migrated beyond “the Rock” (the Urals). Landlords hunted for their peasants who scattered, sought concealment among other landlords, ran away to the Ukraine, to the Cossacks.<sup>44</sup>

As Richard Hellie has shown, many of the higher nobility were unenthusiastic about this coercive solution to Russia’s mobilizational problems. With large estates, they did not need to squeeze their serfs as harshly as smaller landowners, whose peasants they could often lure on to their own lands. Besides, many wealthy landlords, with surplus land, woods, and other resources, could generate significant entrepreneurial revenues. Most interested in the new laws were lesser nobles, whose livelihoods and status depended almost entirely on their control of serf labor.<sup>45</sup>

The decision to introduce serfdom in this strong form committed Muscovite and later Russian governments more strongly than before to mobilizational methods that were direct and coercive rather than commercial in form and driven by market forces. (Soviet governments would make similar choices in the 1920s.)<sup>46</sup> Did Muscovite governments have any real choice? Could a less autocratic and more commercially minded Muscovite government have mobilized more effectively by stimulating the independent entrepreneurial activities of merchants and peasants? Or is it possible that Muscovite governments adopted coercive mobilizational solutions because they were better aligned with Muscovy’s autocratic political culture and Muscovy’s geographical and military environment? It is striking that, under Inner Eurasian conditions of low productivity and thin populations, even coercive forms of mobilization proved very effective at raising total production. However, while it tightened the fiscal screws on the peasantry, the government was careful not to repeat the mistakes of Ivan IV by pressing so hard that it provoked depopulation and flight, leaving untilled the arable lands on which the wealth of the entire mobilizational machine depended.

Whatever mobilizational strategies it adopted, the government would need more cash as its expenditures rose. In just 30 years, between 1630 and 1660, payments to soldiers increased by four times. So, though the government had few significant cash expenses apart from defense, military reforms forced it to look for new ways of mobilizing cash as well as labor. In 1680, the government prepared the first proper state budget, and in 1679, after completing a new census, it shifted the burden of direct taxes from the land to individual households.<sup>47</sup> Not surprisingly, this encouraged multi-generational households

that paid less tax per person, which is why the experiment would be abandoned within a generation.

Muscovy's cash economy expanded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that increased the revenues that could be mobilized through indirect taxation. Foreign trade, particularly through Archangel, brought in vital supplies of silver, much of it, now, from the Americas. Foreign silver provided the metal for Muscovite coins. Internally, profits increased from the exploitation of salt mines and fisheries, and increasing sales of Siberian furs and distilled liquor or "vodka."<sup>48</sup> Along with tolls on taverns, tolls on trade provided the largest single items of cash revenue in the seventeenth century.<sup>49</sup> Salt and vodka were powerful generators of cash even in the largely natural economy of Muscovy's villages because they were among the few commodities that every household needed (salt as a preservative, vodka for ceremonial and medicinal purposes), though few peasant households could produce them, so they had to be purchased. Muscovite governments tapped these monetary flows with great success. The production and sale of vodka was particularly profitable as populations grew, as more *kabaks* or taverns were established in urban and rural areas, and as the government tightened its monopoly on the production and sale of distilled liquor.<sup>50</sup>

The government experimented with many new ways of raising cash. It tried taxes on bathhouses, on furs, on brewing and distilling, on boats, on the production of butter or caviar, on marriages, on river crossings, on the trade in silks, as well as special taxes to pay for particular military contingents such as the *strel'tsy*, or taxes to support fire brigades.<sup>51</sup> Merchants paid 2.5 percent on the value of their goods every time they crossed a customs station; they paid 2.5 percent for unsold goods, 5 percent for goods sold, as well as fees on the weighing and storage of goods. They paid taxes on their carts and boats, on their homes and shops, as well as road taxes, post taxes, and taxes to ransom slaves captured by the Tatars.

Merchants complained bitterly and regularly, but there is little evidence that tolls significantly depressed their profits. In the seventeenth century, differences in tolls between different towns diminished, which suggests the emergence of flourishing nationwide markets.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, though the government competed with its own merchants, the limited evidence suggests that government exports accounted for only about 10 percent of Russian foreign trade in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Besides, many merchants profited from their close relationship with the government. So it is probably not true, as Bakhrushin once argued, that the state squeezed merchants "like a lemon." On the contrary, Bushkovitch argues that, "in some cases, the merchants squeezed the state dry, as well as the townsmen and peasants who paid the tolls and bought the vodka."<sup>53</sup>

In fact, merchants, like nobles, should be seen as shareholders in the Muscovite mobilizational machine. While nobles mobilized directly and coercively, merchants mobilized through markets, but in partnership with the government. They understood markets better than most officials, but, like all entrepreneurs, they were always happy to exploit monopolies or other possibilities for taking "rents," usually by collaborating with the government. And that is why Russian



merchants often looked more like government officials than like independent entrepreneurs. Like officials, they were organized in ranks. The richest, the *gosti*, included 20–30 of Moscow’s wealthiest traders, as well as smaller numbers in other towns. Like the most powerful boyars, with whom they rubbed shoulders, the *gosti* often handled important and sometimes lucrative government transactions. At lower levels, towns elected elders (*starosty*) and assistants (*tseloval’niki*), most of them merchants. Their main tasks were to collect taxes, as well as the commercial tolls and revenues from taverns that provided the largest single sources of revenue in most towns throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>54</sup>

The close symbiotic relationship between the state and the merchantry explains why the Russian merchant seemed so different from English or Dutch counterparts.

Unlike the English or Dutch merchant, he was not part of a vast network of overseas trade nor was he the beneficiary of great empires in America and Asia. He rarely left his own country, used no sophisticated bookkeeping or financial techniques, and by the standards of Amsterdam or London was not a man of tremendous wealth.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, Russia’s merchants played a crucial role in the Muscovite mobilizational machine as markets became increasingly important. Merchants were, after all, specialists in commercial methods of mobilization. And many profited handsomely from their close relationship with the Muscovite mobilizational machine.

## ELITES: MAINTAINING COHESION

In the seventeenth century, after the temporary breakdown of the Time of Troubles, elite cohesion was re-established and consolidated. We have already seen the astonishing, spontaneous remobilization from below of Russian nobles and officials in 1613. In the following decades, a series of ad hoc reforms tightened the formal and informal ties that cemented Muscovy’s autocratic elite culture.

The mushrooming bureaucracy created many new openings for servitors of lower rank. At the accession of Mikhail Romanov, there were about 35 government *prikazy*, staffed by about 500 *pod’iachie*, or clerks. By the end of the century there were more than 60 *prikazy*, served by about 3,000 *pod’iachie*.<sup>56</sup> The tasks of the *prikazy* indicate the overwhelming importance of military and financial mobilization. The three most important *prikazy* handled military service and *pomest’e* allocations (the *razriadnyi* and *pomestnyi prikazy*), and foreign affairs (the ambassadorial or *posol’skii prikaz*). New government positions also appeared in the provinces:

the town governors helped reassemble and update chancellery cadastral knowledge, review the monasteries’ fiscal immunities, return fugitive townsmen to the tax rolls, introduce new extraordinary taxes for military exigencies, suppress

banditry and rebuild the *pomest'e*-based cavalry army by expediting response to petitions for entitlement award and land allotment.<sup>57</sup>

By the 1640s, the staff of governors' (*voevoda*'s) offices included about 775 clerks (*pod'iachie*), but many more clerks served in the regional offices of other government organizations.<sup>58</sup> The expanding class of lesser servitors increased the power of the Tsar by counter-balancing the boyar elite. Russia's elites were increasingly dominated by officials with little independent power, who could be controlled through royal patronage.<sup>59</sup> During the unstable 20 years after Alexei Mikhailovich's death, the authority of the Tsar would decline, but not by much. In 1682, the system of *mestrichestvo* was finally abolished, which created the legal space that Peter the Great would eventually take to re-establish the Tsar's autocratic powers over the high nobility.

The increasing reach and power of the autocracy is apparent even during the political crises it faced. The most dangerous were early in the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich, and during the regency of Sophia. In 1648, riots broke out in Moscow and other towns, aimed mainly at the corrupt rule of Alexei Mikhailovich's regent and brother-in-law, Boris Morozov. Momentarily, the riots threatened the life of the young Tsar. They played an important role in the government's decision to summon a new Assembly of the Land in 1649, and concede the demands of lesser servitors that peasants be tied to their land in perpetuity.<sup>60</sup> In 1656 and 1662 there were further urban riots, caused, this time, by debasement of the coinage. What is remarkable in these crises is the specificity of the rioters' goals. They were directed at particular royal officials or advisers or specific politics, never, apparently, at the institution of autocracy. This helps explain why no one complained after 1683 when the government ceased summoning the Assemblies of the Land, which had met periodically since the reign of Ivan IV.<sup>61</sup> As with the *quriltai* in the Golden Horde, few noticed their disappearance. Neither institution had really provided a framework for negotiations with the monarch; instead, they had provided sources of information for autocratic rulers, and mechanisms for consolidating elite unity.

The Orthodox Church played its role in binding society together at many different levels. The great seventeenth-century patriarchs, Hermogen (1606–1612), Filaret (1619–1634), Nikon (1652–1658 or 1666), and Ioakim (1674–1690) used their moral authority, wealth, and political influence to defend autocracy. The church championed what it saw as Muscovite values, and encouraged the quarantining of foreigners, including the Protestant officers of the new formation units, in ghettos such as Moscow's "German quarter." Occasionally, the authority of the patriarchs seemed to rival that of the Tsars. Patriarch Hermogen played a crucial role during the Time of Troubles, and both Filaret and Nikon occasionally referred to themselves as the *Velikii Gosudar*, or "Great Ruler." But the Russian autocracy was never as dependent on religious institutions as leaders in Mongolia or Central Asia, as Peter the Great demonstrated when, after the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700, he let the patriarchate lapse.

Russia's elites would maintain their cohesion despite three potentially divisive cultural schisms. The first was a split within the church itself in the

seventeenth century. The second was the growing cultural divide between an increasingly westernized upper nobility and a still traditional society. The third was the cultural, linguistic, and historical division that emerged between the Orthodox and Slavic-speaking heartland of Muscovy and the empire's growing population of non-Orthodox non-Slavic speakers.

The religious schism, like many religious conflicts in Inner Eurasia, reflected divisions between the institutionalized religions of the cities and the more magical religious traditions of the villages and steppes. It began with one more attempt to regulate dissident religious practices, by removing Catholic and popular influences that had seeped in from Poland and Ukraine. In 1648 the government banned performances by *skomorokhi* or minstrels. In 1652, the newly appointed Patriarch Nikon introduced new service books that, under the guise of returning to ancient practice, introduced unfamiliar rituals, some of which offended traditional believers. For example, his reforms required making the sign of the cross with three fingers, rather than two, and denounced the incorrect gesture as heretical. Particularly in rural areas, where magic was a live force and correct ritual was a matter of life and death, salvation or damnation, many were horrified at these changes.

Eventually, Nikon's autocratic manner and exaggerated claims for the church's independence alienated members of the political elite, including the Tsar, and in 1666, a specially convened ecumenical council deposed Nikon as patriarch. But the government persisted with the liturgical reforms despite growing resistance. Some adherents of the "Old Belief," such as the priest Avvakum, would be exiled and sentenced to death. Avvakum was eventually burnt at the stake. Others went underground, where they would provide support and legitimation for religious dissidence from then until the present day, particularly in rural areas and steppe borderlands such as the Cossack lands.<sup>62</sup>

The diffusion of European culture within Muscovy created a second fissure between Muscovy's elite and the mass of the population. As foreign visitors noted, Muscovy's cultural traditions were strikingly different from those of Europe.

In the figurative arts there was no free-standing portraiture, still life, landscapes or urban scenes, history painting or domestic genre. There were icons, wood prints and illuminated manuscripts, but no painting in oil on canvas. ... Printing (introduced in 1564) was in its infancy. Muscovy had no theatres or universities. It had produced no poets, dramatists, philosophers, scholars or even theologians. It lacked both theoretical concepts of "the arts" and political theory.<sup>63</sup>

However, extensive borrowing from the technological and military traditions of Europe, and particularly from Ukraine after that region's incorporation within the empire, ensured that western cultural influences would seep into Muscovite society, particularly through the elite circles close to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and his son, Fedor. In the capital, foreign military experts mingled with leading officials. In 1672, Alexei Mikhailovich invited a European theater company, and European artists worked in the Kremlin Armory. Prince Vasili Golitsyn

knew Latin, owned foreign books, prints, instruments, and curiosities, and collected secular portraits. Though limited to the elite, such influences generated disquiet. In 1690 Patriarch Ioakim advised the young Tsars Ivan and Peter “to resist new Latin and alien customs and not to introduce the wearing of foreign dress.”<sup>64</sup>

The third cultural division, between the Orthodox heartland and the non-Russian, non-Orthodox, and non-Slavic peoples that Muscovy was incorporating within its expanding empire, would become increasingly significant from the eighteenth century.

## *EXPANSION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

However, Muscovy’s renovated mobilization machine proved so robust that none of these divisions seriously weakened it. The best proof of its increasing power was its ability to expand within Inner Eurasia. In 1600, Muscovy ruled over *c.*5.4 million sq. kilometers; by 1678 it controlled three times that area, or almost 16 million sq. kilometers.<sup>65</sup> Muscovy’s expansion was both a cause and a result of its increasing mobilizational power.

Muscovy expanded in three main directions, each of which posed distinctive challenges. (1) To the west, Muscovy’s main opponents were the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden, and expansion took Muscovy into Ukraine. (2) To the south, Muscovy expanded into the Pontic steppes; here, its main opponents were the Crimean khanate and the Ottoman Empire. (3) In this period Muscovy also began expanding for the first time beyond the Volga and the Urals, into Siberia and the Kazakh steppes. This chapter will describe expansion to the west and south, while the next chapter will describe Muscovite expansion beyond the Urals, along with the parallel process of Chinese expansion into Inner Eurasia. (See Map 6.1 and Figure 6.2.)

### EXPANSION TO THE WEST

Since the collapse of the Livonian Order in 1560, Sweden, Lithuania/Poland, and Muscovy had fought over the farmlands and commerce of the Baltic provinces. For a century, Muscovy gained little from these expensive wars, while Sweden had secured much of modern Estonia, and Lithuania/Poland controlled most of modern Latvia and northern Lithuania. The 1618 treaty of Deulino left the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in control of Ukraine and much of Belarus, including Smolensk. The Smolensk war of 1632 did little to change the situation.

The balance of power in the west was transformed in the middle of the century after a 1648 revolt against the Commonwealth in Ukraine. It was led by a disgruntled Cossack officer, Bohdan Khmelnitskii, who was elected leader (Hetman) of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in March 1648. He allied with Nogai troops from the Crimean khanate, and in May their combined forces crushed two Polish armies. Their success encouraged anti-Polish uprisings throughout Ukraine. Rebels attacked Polish landlords and officials, Catholic clergy, and

many Jews. In December, Khmel'nitskii arrived in triumph in Kiev, now as the leader of a new state of "Rus'."

The Polish Commonwealth had neither the cash nor the troops needed to respond effectively, and its rulers were weakened further in 1652 when the *Sejm* recognized the right of any individual member to veto legislation through the *liberum veto*. Nevertheless, Khmel'nitskii was also vulnerable and looking for allies, particularly after the desertion of his Crimean allies led to a humiliating defeat in 1651. He opened negotiations with both the Polish and Ottoman governments, and even considered accepting Crimean suzerainty, but these negotiations achieved little. In January 1654, in Pereiaslav, he swore allegiance to a fellow Orthodox believer, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. He accepted the Tsar as the new ruler of Ukraine, in return for the promise of military support.<sup>66</sup> But what Khmel'nitskii and his followers saw as an alliance, Muscovy saw as an acquisition. Ukraine soon found it had a new overlord, much less willing to negotiate than the Commonwealth, but much more powerful (Map 7.1).

In defense of its new acquisitions, Muscovy now took up arms against the Commonwealth, launching a 13-year war that would end with the armistice of Andrusovo in 1667. The 13-year war devastated Poland, because it was largely fought on Polish soil. Polish populations diminished and would not recover to the 1648 level of about 11 million until the middle of the eighteenth century.



Map 7.1 Muscovite expansion into Ukraine. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, 104.

Under the treaty of Andrusovo, Muscovy gained suzerainty over all of Ukraine east of the Dnieper, as well as over the capital, Kiev. Moscow began stationing troops along the eastern bank of the Dnieper (“left-bank Ukraine”), and exacting taxes that had once gone to the Commonwealth. In 1686, Muscovy signed a so-called “Treaty of Eternal Peace” with King Jan Sobiecki of the Commonwealth, but in fact the treaty marked Muscovy’s increasing dominance.<sup>67</sup> Ukraine retained some autonomy and would continue to elect its own leader or Hetman, though the elections were often influenced by Moscow.

With control over left-bank Ukraine, Muscovy now found itself confronting a more powerful rival than the declining Commonwealth. This was the Ottoman Empire. In 1676–1681 the two countries fought their first major war over Russian attempts to extend control to west (right-bank) Ukraine. The war ended in a stalemate.<sup>68</sup>

## EXPANSION INTO THE PONTIC STEPPES

On its southern frontiers, Muscovy expanded into the borderlands of the Crimean khanate. As in the sixteenth century, Muscovite expansion was defensive in its aims, but expansionist in its outcomes. The government’s main aim was to defend its territory against Crimean raids that cost lives and money, and forced Muscovy to divert troops from its western borders. Nevertheless, southward expansion would multiply the human and agrarian resources available to Muscovy’s rulers, as peasants settled and farmed the rich soils of the Pontic steppes.

In the seventeenth century, Moscow’s armies still lacked the ability to attack Crimea directly. There were two attempts, in 1687 and 1689, under the leadership of Prince Vasili Golitsyn. Both demonstrated the limits of Muscovy’s military power in the steppes. The perennial difficulty, for Muscovite armies, as for Qing armies in the Far East, was how to keep infantry armies supplied with water, food, and fodder once they entered the steppes. In 1687, Golitsyn planned to attack Perekop, on the isthmus between Crimea and the Pontic steppes, with an army of more than 130,000 men, after marching them across 300 kilometers of steppeland. In June,

some 180,000 combatants and support personnel and 20,000 wagons of supplies, moved south, along the eastern side of the Dnepr ... in two formations: a vanguard of seven infantry regiments, and a monstrous rectangular *wagenburg* or protective circle of wagons, measuring 1.5 m across and perhaps 5 km in length. The Muscovite and Ukrainian cavalry was deployed outside the *wagenburg*, close in along each side, out of fear of Tatar attack.<sup>69</sup>

To survive in the Pontic steppes for over four months, the army would need some 23,000 tons of grain and 9,000 tons of fodder, and it is a sign of the effectiveness of Muscovite military provisioning that the needed grain was brought by wagon and barge to the assembly points. What the army lacked was fodder, as Crimean forces burnt the grassland in front of the advancing armies. Golitsyn’s far less mobile army could only move at about 10 kilometers a day

through the steppe, because it could not outpace its ox-drawn baggage trains. Once it was clear that all potential fodder had been burnt, Golitsyn turned back. The second Crimean expedition, in 1689, would get further but suffer the same fate, turning back once it was clear there was not enough fodder or water.

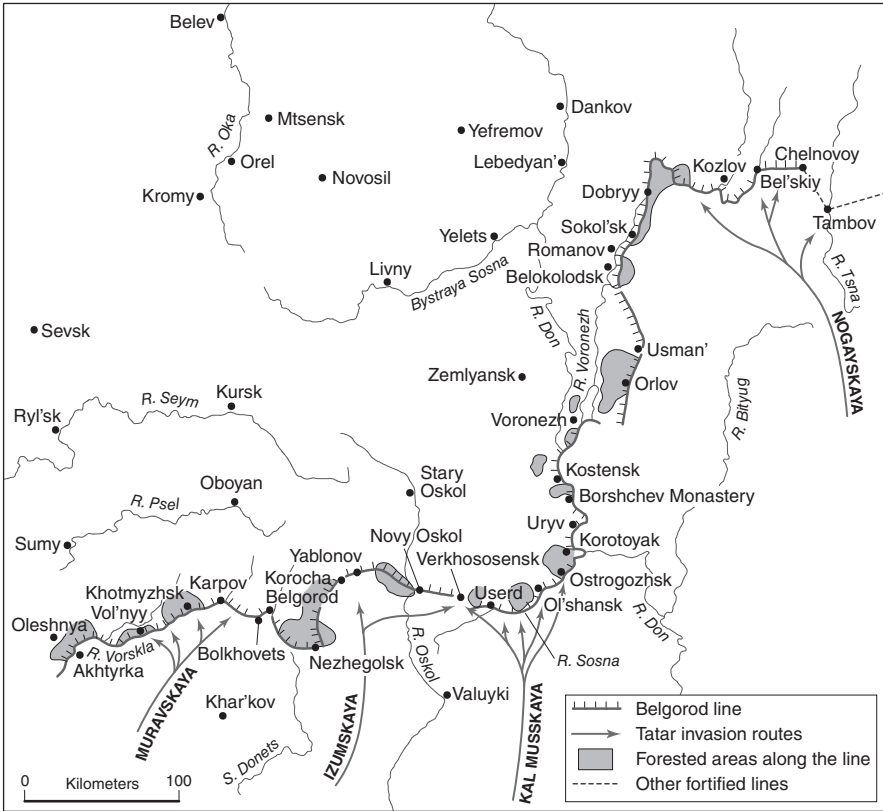
So Muscovy had to use more indirect methods to manage the steppes. To gain the support of Don Cossack communities, the Romanovs maintained the subsidies they had begun to pay under Ivan IV. They also encouraged trade in grain (vital to the Cossacks, whose raiding limited possibilities for agriculture), liquor, textiles, and lead and gunpowder, in return for salt, fish, horses, and even furs.<sup>70</sup> Though Muscovy had little direct control over the Cossacks in the seventeenth century, trade and subsidies gave it plenty of indirect influence.

But the most important way of controlling the steppes was by continuing the sixteenth-century policy of building forts at strategic points.<sup>71</sup> These were the land equivalents of the fortified “factories” established by the first European empires. Like these overseas bases, strategically based strongpoints in the steppe could project military and commercial power over large areas, so they were well suited to the distinctive Inner Eurasian challenge of mobilizing resources at great distances.

In the 1630s, after highly destructive Crimean raids in 1632 and 1633, made possible by the diversion of Russian troops to the siege of Smolensk, Muscovy resumed the building of fortified lines. Between 1635 and 1637, a huge mobilization of labor helped build 11 new garrison towns, most of which were settled by smallholders with no peasants of their own.<sup>72</sup> As Khodarkovsky writes, this immense project was “Russia’s most ambitious and important strategic undertaking in the seventeenth century. It was to become Moscow’s own Great Wall to fend off the ‘infidels’ from the southern steppe.”<sup>73</sup>

The new defensive lines linked natural barriers, fortified towns, wooden stockades, and lookout posts into a single system, whose aim was to block or render unusable the traditional invasion routes from the south. Forts were built at river crossings or portages or at crucial river junctions, and staffed with garrison troops commanded by the local governor or *voevoda*. Between fortified points forests were left uncut or cut down to form barricades. Observation posts were built out in the steppes, from which guards could watch for raiding parties. At first, garrison troops were paid, but over time many were given land grants from which to support themselves. Peasants were often settled near fortified towns to supply the towns and their garrisons with food. But compulsion was not always necessary, as many peasants were attracted to the rich steppe soils and willing to face the risks of frontier life.

Between 1635 and 1646, the government completed the so-called Belgorod line, with its western end at Akhtyra on the Vorskla river, and its eastern end at Tambov, 800 kilometers away (Map 7.2).<sup>74</sup> After the Stenka Razin revolt, in 1671, the government began introducing all the paraphernalia of a modern border to check emigration, including the issuing of travel documents giving permission to cross the line, and patrols to pick up those without the proper documents.<sup>75</sup> In the next decade, with the aid of Dutch and Huguenot military experts, the line was extended further east, reaching the Volga river at Simbirsk



**Map 7.2** The Belgorod line in the mid-seventeenth century. Shaw, “Southern Frontiers of Muscovy,” 128. Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

(modern Ulyanovsk). By 1655, the fortified line along Muscovy’s southern borders extended from the Polish border to the Urals.<sup>76</sup> From 1658, troops of the southern frontier were led by a commanding general based at Belgorod.

The new fortification lines increased the dangers and reduced the rewards for Tatar raiding parties. Slave raids declined after 1654, and were undertaken by smaller raiding parties that could neither travel as far nor take as many captives as larger armies.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, Crimea itself began to suffer from Kalmyk and Don Cossack raids. A visitor to the region in the 1660s and early 1670s found many villages abandoned because of Cossack raids.<sup>78</sup> So threatening were Kalmyk raiders that in the 1660s, the Crimean khanate began building its own fortified lines to protect the grazing lands of their Nogai allies north of the Crimean peninsula. They also built a special stone wall to protect the Crimean heartland.<sup>79</sup>

As the balance of power shifted in the Pontic steppes, more peasants headed south, driven by overpopulation in their homelands, and drawn by the rich steppe soils and the protection of border forts. Many settlers were poor middle servicemen with just two or three serfs or none at all. Most settled near forts,



but others moved beyond the fortified lines into Cossack lands. The borderlands offered many opportunities for advancement, as undermanned forts and garrisons often accepted new recruits without asking too many questions, and frontier towns desperately needed labor, particularly for building.<sup>80</sup> Migration accelerated after the completion of the Belgorod line in the 1650s; the populations of Belgorod and Sevsk regions quadrupled between 1650 and 1710.<sup>81</sup> Sometimes, whole villages arrived together, to settle along the forested shores of rivers. Because new arrivals sometimes displaced local Cossacks and pastoralists, their arrival could provoke violent conflicts, and these played a significant role in the Zaporozhian revolt of 1654 and the Stenka Razin uprising of 1670–1671.<sup>82</sup>

Illegal migration raised complex problems for the government as it deprived landlords in central Russia of labor. Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich commented that, “It is good to settle a new town, but not by emptying out old ones.”<sup>83</sup> On balance, though, it is clear from the expense and effort that successive Muscovite governments devoted to their fortified lines that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, as Muscovy’s vast “walking walls” of forts inched south through the Pontic steppes, shielding a vast army of peasant settlers.

## *THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AS A GREAT POWER*

By 1700, the Muscovite mobilizational machine was larger, more modern, and more unified than a century earlier. It disposed of more people and more resources. And it was using those resources successfully to expand to the west, south, and east. The reign of Peter the Great is often seen as a turning point in Russian history, but Peter built on the achievements of his predecessors, though he did so with more deliberation and a clearer sense of purpose. The speed and success of Peter’s reforms are as much a testament to the success of seventeenth-century reforms as they are to Peter’s own skill and determination.

Like Ivan IV, Peter increased mobilizational pressure on his subjects by tightening pressure on the elite. But unlike Ivan IV, Peter never lost his grip on political and economic realities, despite the colossal strains under which the system labored. The container held, increasing the mobilizational pressure that the system could exert on its own population and on rival states. Peter’s reforms transformed the army, the elite, the fiscal system, and Russian culture, and turned Russia into a military superpower. The basic structures they created would survive for almost two centuries.

### PETER’S MILITARY REFORMS

Peter I was born in 1672, the son of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich by his second wife, Natalia Naryshkina. He became Tsar in his own right in 1696 when his brother, Ivan, died. As a child Peter was fascinated by warfare and by European technology and culture. As a prince, he played war games with real regiments,

the Semenovskoe and Preobrazhenskoe. Created by Peter in the 1680s, they would become elite Guards units in the Russian army. But at first they formed a sort of personal following and bodyguard. Like Chinggis Khan's *keshig*, they would provide many of the ruler's closest friends and allies. Peter's fascination with naval and military matters brought him close to foreign military experts such as the Scottish general Patrick Gordon and the French general François Lefort, and these friendships persuaded him of the importance of foreign learning. In 1697, Peter became the first ruler of Muscovy to visit Europe. There, he devoted his time to acquiring militarily useful European knowledge. Briefly, he worked in the Amsterdam shipyards, where he tried, in vain, to remain anonymous.

He returned in 1698, after learning of a rebellion by the *strel'tsy*. He suppressed the rebellion with great brutality, perhaps in part because of terrifying childhood memories of a *strel'tsy* rebellion in 1682 when he had nearly been killed. There began a period of frenetic military reform, during which he gathered around himself a loyal and hard-working group of friends and dependents, some from the boyar class, but many from lower levels of society. Some came from the Guards regiments, some from the foreign quarter. All were capable, energetic, and practical, and shared Peter's appetite for military reform. After Sweden defeated his armies at Narva, in 1700, Peter committed himself wholeheartedly to reform. That defeat increased Peter's confidence in his own reform ideas, because his Guards regiments were the only units to perform creditably at Narva.

Peter's reforms are best seen as a massive, high-pressure mobilizational effort, driven by a disciplined and unified elite of the kind we have seen many times in the history of Inner Eurasia. For the most part, scale mattered more than efficiency in Peter's early campaigns. They would not have been possible without the innovations of the seventeenth century or Peter's driving energy.<sup>84</sup>

The first step was to recruit more soldiers. Recruitment of peasants had become more common in the seventeenth century, but Peter recruited more systematically after taking a new census of the population. He demanded one recruit from every 20 households, selected either by serfowners or by peasant communes. After 1705, recruits had to serve not just for a single campaign, but for life. Lifelong commitment to the army, and the consequent severing of ties with the civilian world, would become one of the keys to Russian military discipline until the 1870s. During his reign, Peter mobilized almost 300,000 soldiers, of whom half would die of disease or on the battlefield. He also recruited mercenaries and irregular units of Cossacks, Tatars, and Kalmyk, which added another 100,000 troops. Infantry recruits were trained in European military techniques, often by captured Swedish officers.

In 1703, Peter finally secured an outlet on the Baltic, when Russian troops occupied land at the eastern tip of the Gulf of Finland. Here Peter founded a new city, St. Petersburg. In 1711, it became the empire's new capital. That shift reflected the government's conviction that its most dangerous enemies, and its most important teachers, now lay to the west. In 1709, at the battle of Poltava in Ukraine, Peter's armies defeated those of Charles XII of Sweden. This was a major turning point in the Northern Wars that had begun in 1558.<sup>85</sup> By 1721,

at the treaty of Nystadt, Russia had emerged as the dominant power in northern and eastern Europe. Russia gained Karelia and Ingria with St. Petersburg, as well as the Baltic provinces of Estonia and Livonia. Peter had achieved all the goals of Ivan IV's Livonian wars, which had started more than a century and a half earlier.

## FISCAL REFORMS

Peter's mobilizational effort transformed the Russian economy and affected all levels of society.

In the seventeenth century, military expenditures often consumed 60 percent of government expenditure. Under Peter they may have consumed 70 or 80 percent.<sup>86</sup> In addition to recruiting soldiers, Peter drafted hundreds of thousands to work on public projects such as the building of St. Petersburg. The population felt the increased fiscal burden as much through recruitment and *corvée* labor as through cash taxes. But cash taxes also increased, perhaps by as much as 200 or 300 percent during his reign. So desperate was Peter for cash that in the early part of his reign he created a special office whose only task was to dream up new taxes. Their innovations included taxes on bathhouses, on windows, and even on beards, as many of Peter's male subjects refused on religious grounds to adopt the clean-shaven European look that Peter now favored.

Between 1719 and 1724, Peter consolidated most new taxes into a single "poll tax," levied on all non-noble males or "souls." The poll tax would survive until the 1880s. Its introduction was preceded by a new census in 1721, and the tax began to be collected in 1724 at a rate of 74 kopecks per soul. As it cost 28.5 rubles to maintain an infantryman for a year, and *c.*34.5 to maintain a cavalryman, this meant that it took about 47 souls to maintain one infantryman and 57 to maintain a single cavalryman.<sup>87</sup> In effect, these reforms turned all state peasants (peasants not under the direct control of landlords) into serfs of the state, because now even state serfs were banned from resettling without permission. But in practice the burden of the new poll or soul tax may have been lower than that of the multifarious taxes introduced early in Peter's reign.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, Peter's reforms were burdensome and, like the huge mobilization drive under Ivan IV, they created dangerous new stresses. Peasants began to flee, particularly in the overpopulated central provinces, and Peter faced several large-scale revolts in border regions where disgruntled peasants enjoyed the support of Cossacks or non-Russian peoples also suffering under Peter's heavy hand. There were rebellions in Astrakhan, and in the Bashkir lands. In 1707–1708, a Don Cossack Hetman, Bulavin, led 100,000 serfs, slaves, Cossacks, Tatars, and religious dissidents northwards, promising to abolish serfdom and return to the Old Belief.

The borderlands themselves became part of the mobilizational process, for it was during Peter's reign that the government began for the first time to plan systematically for colonization of the steppes. As Peter's adviser, Ivan Pososhkov, reminded him, "an empty place produces no revenue."<sup>89</sup> By 1750, two centuries of building fortified lines had effectively incorporated the forest-steppe

regions along Muscovy's southern borders, encouraging a massive southwards migration of peasants from Muscovy's heartlands. By the middle of the eighteenth century, a quarter of Russia's population lived in the central Black Earth region, an increase due not just to migration but also to the high fertility rates typical in newly colonized lands.<sup>90</sup> These peasant migrations may have been the largest such movements within Europe between 1500 and 1800, and they accounted for much of the population increase that buoyed Muscovy's economy and armies.<sup>91</sup>

## REFORMS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ELITE

Peter also reformed the Russian nobility and government. In 1717, he replaced Muscovy's traditional *prikazy* with "colleges," modeled on Swedish examples. The Russian heartland was divided into provinces, many of which have survived to the present day. And, like Chinggis Khan and Timur, he created a nobility willing and able to serve an autocratic ruler, and as bureaucratized as Moscow's officials and merchants. In 1700, the Russian nobility was still small. No more than 15,000 males were entitled to own serfs in a population of 11 to 15 million.<sup>92</sup> Peter returned from Europe determined to Europeanize the nobility by making them wear European dress, acquire an education, and even take part in social events with their wives, at so-called "assemblies." By the end of his reign, most nobles *looked* different from their serfs, and some were beginning to *speak* differently. Peter strictly enforced the requirement that all nobles serve in return for land. Officials kept lists of nobles and summoned individuals to St. Petersburg as soon as they were old enough to serve. Peter also tried to educate the Russian ruling elite. He founded the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1724 and recruited large numbers of foreign scholars and scientists, laying the foundations for what would eventually become a rich Russian tradition of scientific scholarship.

Peter militarized the nobility by tying rank more closely than ever before to service rather than lineage. The "Table of Ranks," introduced in 1722, was a list of ranks that applied not just to the army, but to the entire noble class. In theory, rank now depended on service to the government rather than on birth, and noble status could be achieved simply by attaining the requisite rank in the army or civil service. According to the new act:

All state officials, Russian or foreign, who now belong, or have formerly belonged, to the first eight classes, and their legitimate children and descendants in perpetuity, must be considered equal in all dignities and advantages to the best and oldest nobility, even if they are of humble origin ... Any military man who is not [himself a hereditary] noble and who attains the rank of a company-grade officer becomes a nobleman; all his children born after the promotion are also nobles.<sup>93</sup>

Peter mobilized merchants as well as peasants and nobles. He ordered merchants to establish the textile and metal factories needed to clothe, arm, and equip his rapidly growing armies. By the end of his reign, Russia was a major iron producer (with most of its iron works in the Urals), a major weapons producer (on the basis of the industries established in Tula in the

early seventeenth century), and the city of Moscow had become a major textiles producer (relying to a considerable extent on cotton imported from Central Asia by Tatar merchants). The 20 or so factories in Russia at the beginning of Peter's reign had increased to about 200 by its end. Militarily, Russia was now largely self-sufficient. It could produce most of the weapons that armed its soldiers, and most of the textiles that clothed them.

The powerful, high-pressure system that Peter built would survive for a century and a half, even under the rule of Tsars less powerful and energetic, and less politically astute than himself. But Peter had also opened a culturally insulated elite to new international influences. Increased trade with the west through the Baltic would connect the Russian economy with the world economy; while increased openness to the ideas, the styles, and even the architecture, cuisine, and languages of Europe would eventually Europeanize an elite class that had largely been protected from alien influences.

How robust the Petrine system was became clear in the years after his death, when it survived under monarchs of less certain legitimacy than Peter and certainly of less talent and drive. Peter's wife Catherine I (r. 1725–1727) succeeded him, to be followed by Peter's grandson by his first wife, Peter II (r. 1727–1730), then by Peter I's niece, Anna of Courland (r. 1730–1740), then by a great-nephew, Ivan VI (r. 1740–1741). Peter I's daughter, Elizabeth I (r. 1741–1762), ruled for over 20 years, and was succeeded by a grandson of Peter I, Peter III (1762). Peter III did not last long. He was murdered by Guards officers who were allies of his wife, the young German princess who would become Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796).

The system survived this period of instability, though the power of the nobility increased relative to that of the autocrats. As the nobility became more westernized, they shrugged off some of the more extreme demands Peter had placed on them. They even showed an ability and willingness to manage autocracy by removing incompetent monarchs when necessary. In the eighteenth century there were at least eight separate coups or attempted coups, usually with the involvement of the elite Guards regiments. Several coups led to the deaths of monarchs or candidates for the monarchy; Ivan VI, Peter III, and Paul I (r. 1796–1801) all died in this way.<sup>94</sup> But the autocracy survived, along with the traditions of elite cohesion that sustained its power, and the Russian Empire retained the Great Power status it had achieved under Peter the Great.

## *EXPANSION IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

The Petrine reforms provided the mobilizational muscle needed for further expansion in the early eighteenth century. By 1678 Muscovy ruled almost 16 million sq. kilometers.<sup>95</sup> By 1750 the Russian Empire ruled over 22 million sq. kilometers.<sup>96</sup> Expansion beyond the Urals will be described in the next chapter; but it was expansion to the west and south that provided the crucial tests of Russia's increasing mobilizational and military power.

In the early eighteenth century, the Russian Empire tightened its grip on both Ukraine and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After the battle of

Poltava in 1709, during which the Ukrainian Hetman, Mazepa, made the fatal mistake of allying with Peter's enemy, Charles XII of Sweden, Peter I began attaching Russian viceroys to the Ukrainian Hetman. But Ukraine was not finally incorporated into the Russian Empire until 1781, with the abolition of the "Little Russian College."<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, Russia's influence increased over Polish monarchs and the Polish *Sejm*. Under Peter I, Russia began to meddle in the election of Polish kings, and Poland itself began to look like a Russian protectorate. As early as 1721, King Augustus, who had been elected under strong Russian pressure, proposed a partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that would leave Russia in control of much of Lithuania.

Increasing Russian control over Ukraine guaranteed conflict with the Ottoman Empire, as did Peter's ambitious plans for expansion into the Black Sea and in Central Asia. In 1696, Russia briefly secured control of Azov. Despite being defeated by Ottoman armies on the Pruth river in 1711, Russia's armies would demonstrate their superiority in several eighteenth-century conflicts with the Ottoman Empire, in 1736–1739, 1768–1774, and 1787–1792. The treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, after the war of 1768–1774, effectively gave the Russian Empire control over the entire Pontic steppe, including most of right-bank as well as left-bank Ukraine.

In Central Asia, Peter's expansionist ambitions were less successful. He dreamed of an empire that could reach India and match the commercial power of the European Asian empires. In 1717, he sent an army of 300 men to conquer Khiva, but it was defeated by Khivan armies, demonstrating, once again, how hard it was for agrarian polities to send armies through the arid steppes and deserts of Inner Eurasia.<sup>98</sup> In 1722, he attempted to invade the southern Caucasus through the Caspian, but again, the military difficulties proved insurmountable, and his forces retreated.

His most spectacular successes were to the immediate west of Russia. Here, the great prize since the time of Ivan IV had been access to the Baltic Sea, and the rich and expanding markets of a Europe that now traded with the entire world. In the first 25 years of the eighteenth century, Peter I seized control of Estonia, the northern parts of modern Latvia, and the region around St. Petersburg, completing the expansionist project Ivan IV had begun in 1558. Russia's crushing defeat of Sweden at the battle of Poltava in 1709 was the turning point. Sweden, with a population of about 2 million, and cash revenues that came largely from the tolls on trade through Riga, could no longer match the immense resources available to Peter's armies.<sup>99</sup> By the end of 1710, Russia controlled the entire region from Riga to Vyborg. With control over the Baltic coast, Peter also gained significant influence over Sweden.

The treaty of Nystadt in 1721 marked Russia's emergence as the dominant power in eastern Europe and the Baltic, and this is also when Peter the Great first began to refer to a Russian "Empire." In 1733, Russian armies would impose a candidate of their own choice on the Polish Diet (King Augustus III), and in 1744 Russian troops would land near Stockholm to defend the Swedish capital against the threat of Danish invasion. The new Russian Empire had achieved military domination over its most powerful western enemies.

## NOTES

- 1 Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, 59, 61; and see Brooke, *Climate Change*, 258 (Fig. III.10).
- 2 Cho, “The Little Ice Age”; and Brooke, *Climate Change*, 396 (Fig. IV.1).
- 3 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 257.
- 4 Parker, *Global Crisis*, 178.
- 5 Parker, *Global Crisis*, is now the definitive account of the Seventeenth-Century Crisis.
- 6 Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, and Lieberman, *Beyond Binary Histories*.
- 7 Marks, “‘Exhausting the Earth’,” 32; Marks’s essay is a good summary of the process of increasingly intense global exploitation of resources.
- 8 McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 158.
- 9 Mironov with Eklof, *Social History*, 2.
- 10 The classic study of the Time of Troubles is Platonov, *Time of Troubles*; the most recent study is Dunning, *Russia’s First Civil War*.
- 11 Conte, *Les grandes dates*, 63, gives the high figure; Parker, *Global Crisis*, 152, gives a 25 percent decline.
- 12 Pavlov, “Fedor Ivanovich and Boris Godunov,” 272.
- 13 1601 was one of the coldest years in several centuries, in part because of the massive Huaynaputina volcanic eruption; Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, 67.
- 14 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 160–161.
- 15 Kollmann, “Muscovite Russia,” 62.
- 16 Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 1: 206–207, from Pozharskii’s appeal to Sol’vychegodsk.
- 17 On the peasant revolts and their ideologies, see Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism*.
- 18 Collins, *The Present State of Russia*, 66, cited from Poe, “A People Born to Slavery,” 107.
- 19 Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy, 1304–1613*, 226.
- 20 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 161.
- 21 Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 402–411.
- 22 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 530.
- 23 Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*, 7.
- 24 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 161–162.
- 25 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 166.
- 26 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 67.
- 27 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 164.
- 28 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 165.
- 29 Stevens, *Soldiers on the Steppe*, 7; Crummey, *Formation of Muscovy*, 237.
- 30 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 167.
- 31 Kotilaine, “In Defense of the Realm,” on how the Russian army was supplied in this period with modern weaponry, gunpowder, and supplies.
- 32 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 108.
- 33 Kotilaine, “In Defense of the Realm,” 67–69, 77, 84.
- 34 Kotilaine, “In Defense of the Realm,” 91.
- 35 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 166–167.
- 36 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 188ff.
- 37 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 188ff.
- 38 Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii*, 27.

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- 39 Bushkovitch, “Peter the Great and the Northern War,” 491; Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii*, 29.
- 40 Bushkovitch, “Peter the Great and the Northern War,” 493.
- 41 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 373.
- 42 Allen, *Farm to Factory*, 15.
- 43 Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 1: 225–226.
- 44 Cited in Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 108.
- 45 Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence*, 5.
- 46 There’s a small body of theory on the two contrasting pathways of tribute exaction and market-driven growth; see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, on coercion- and capital-intensive states in Europe; and also Hedlund, *Russian Path Dependence*.
- 47 Davies, “Local Government,” 470–471; the shift in the basic unit of assessment from the land to the household had begun in 1645; see Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 371.
- 48 Ananich, “Russian Economy and Banking System,” 394.
- 49 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 152.
- 50 Christian, “*Living Water*,” Ch. 1, traces the growth of the state’s ability to extract liquor revenues from the sixteenth century; and see Schrad, *Vodka Politics*.
- 51 Hellie, *Economy and Material Culture of Russia*, 537–540.
- 52 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 38–39.
- 53 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 157, 167.
- 54 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 159.
- 55 Bushkovitch, *Merchants of Moscow*, 1.
- 56 Poe, “Central Government,” 454–455.
- 57 Davies, “Local Government,” 469.
- 58 Davies, “Local Government,” 467.
- 59 Poe, “Central Government,” 446.
- 60 Hellie, *Enserfment*, 139–140.
- 61 See the list of meetings conventionally reckoned to represent the Assembly of the Land or *Zemskii Sobor* in Poe, “Central Government,” 462.
- 62 On the role of Old Believers in the Don region see Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, Ch. 7.
- 63 Hughes, “Cultural and Intellectual Life,” 641.
- 64 Hughes, “Cultural and Intellectual Life,” 651, 661.
- 65 Davies, “Muscovy at War and Peace,” 486.
- 66 See Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, Ch. 10.
- 67 Davies, “Muscovy at War and Peace,” 514; there is a map of Russian gains on 515.
- 68 Ágoston, “Ottoman Warfare,” 137–138.
- 69 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 178, citation from 179–180.
- 70 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 21, 43.
- 71 On fortification lines, see the summary in Shaw, “Southern Frontiers of Muscovy.”
- 72 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 82ff.
- 73 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 132.
- 74 For maps of Belgorod and Iziium lines, see Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, xiii.
- 75 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 62–63.
- 76 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 91–92; and “Development of Russian Military Power,” 163.
- 77 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 191.
- 78 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 192.
- 79 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 137.
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- 80 Stevens, *Soldiers on the Steppe*, 20–24.  
 81 Stevens, *Soldiers on the Steppe*, 169.  
 82 Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 31.  
 83 Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 29.  
 84 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 169–170.  
 85 See Frost, *The Northern Wars*.  
 86 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 536.  
 87 Based on figures in Hughes, *Peter the Great*, 139.  
 88 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 173.  
 89 Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 42.  
 90 Moon, “Peasant Migration,” 863–864.  
 91 See Lucassen and Lucassen, “The Mobility Transition Revisited,” 357–359.  
 92 Lieven, “The Elites,” 230.  
 93 Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 2: 344.  
 94 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 117–118.  
 95 Davies, “Muscovy at War and Peace,” 486.  
 96 Taagepera, “Overview of the Growth of the Russian Empire,” 3.  
 97 For a Ukrainian perspective on the incorporation of Ukraine within Russia, see Horak, “Russian Expansion.”  
 98 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 40–41.  
 99 Bushkovitch, “Peter the Great and the Northern War,” 492.

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[8] *1600–1750: A TIPPING POINT:  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN INNER  
EURASIA BETWEEN RUSSIA AND  
CHINA*

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Modern maps that show great swaths of colored territory as clearly belonging to one or another khanate, kingdom, principality, or empire are fundamentally misleading about the real nature of sovereignty on the ground. The goal of any political power was to control the locus of extraction, such as a key bridge, port, mountain pass, or fortress.<sup>1</sup>

[H]ere it is not like in Russia, they [the Kazakhs] do not obey my orders.

Abulkhair, khan of the Kazakh Lesser Horde (r. 1718–1748)<sup>2</sup>

The rise of a new hegemonic power in the West had consequences that rippled through all of Inner Eurasia. But in the Far East, communities faced another rising power in Qing China. Over time, Muscovy and China would become the primary engines of change in Inner Eurasia, but the full impact of their power would not become apparent until the eighteenth century.

This chapter will describe changes between 1600 and 1750 in Siberia, in the pastoralist societies of Mongolia, Xinjiang, and the Kazakh and Pontic steppes, and in the more urbanized societies of southern Xinjiang and Transoxiana. With the exception of Transoxiana, this is when most regions of Inner Eurasia east of the Volga began to look like colonies of either Russia or China. In Siberia, Muscovite expansion crushed local communities, transforming them demographically, economically, culturally, and politically. By 1750, Siberia was already looking like a “neo-Europe”: a colony dominated by arrivals from the imperial heartland.<sup>3</sup> Other regions of Inner Eurasia would also be transformed, but less fundamentally. They preserved their cultural traditions more successfully because they were never swamped demographically, so (with the near exception of Kazakhstan) they did not become “neo-Europes.”

But the expansion of Muscovy and China narrowed their options. In the seventeenth century, the conquest of Siberia tripled the area of Muscovy. (See Figure 6.2.) Under the Qing, the Chinese Empire almost doubled in size as

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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it incorporated Xinjiang and eastern and western Mongolia. Indeed, Qing expansion was almost as dramatic as that of the Russian Empire. In western Mongolia, the Qing conquest of Zungharia in the mid-eighteenth century destroyed the last of the great steppe empires. In eastern Mongolia, in Xinjiang, in the Kazakh steppes and Central Asia, pastoral nomadic communities survived, but with greatly reduced power and independence.

### *MUSCOVITE EXPANSION INTO SIBERIA AND FIRST CONTACTS WITH CHINA*

The Muscovite conquest of Siberia was rapid and similar to European expansion in North America. But there was also a crucial difference. European expansion created overseas empires, while Muscovy bordered on Siberia so its expansion created a single contiguous empire.

In 1600, Siberia's indigenous population probably numbered no more than 200,000.<sup>4</sup> Had they not been protected by remoteness, they might have been conquered earlier by Türks, Tatars, Mongols, or Chinese. In fact, their contacts with these peoples were limited to the borderlands of southern Siberia, and had been confined to trade, occasional payments of tribute, and the odd military conflict. Moscow's intervention in Siberia was on a larger scale and much more dangerous, and its impact would prove as destructive and irreversible as European colonization of the Americas.

Muscovite traders and soldiers entered Siberia in pursuit of furs, a revenue stream that had lured the princes and merchants of Rus' since the Middle Ages. In 1600, furs contributed almost 4 percent of Muscovy's income; by the middle of the seventeenth century, they accounted for 10 percent.<sup>5</sup> Moscow's interest in Siberian furs and other resources increased after it conquered the Kazan khanate and the Volga river.<sup>6</sup> In 1558, Tsar Ivan granted the Stroganov family of merchants monopoly rights over the resources of the upper Kama river. The royal charter specifically invited them to prevent the "Siberian Sultan" from stopping "our Ostiaks and Voguls and Ugrians from sending tribute to our treasury."<sup>7</sup> The Stroganovs mined iron and copper, and the salt of Solikamsk ("Salt-on-the-Kama"). They helped fund Ivan IV's Livonian war, which earned them royal patronage, but also made commercial sense given the importance of European commercial outlets for goods acquired in the East. Because their operations in eastern Muscovy had always required armed guards, the Stroganovs, like the merchant companies of Europe, were used to managing soldiers, and they did so under royal charters allowing them to occupy, exploit, and settle "empty" lands east of the Urals, along the Kama, Tobol, Irtysh, and Ob rivers. They used their private armies to extract tributes in furs from native populations of Voguls and Ostiaks.

In 1563, with Nogai support, a Kazakh leader, Kuchum, seized power from the khan of Sibir and took control of the rich fur tributes of western Siberia, drained by the Ob and Irtysh rivers. Kuchum refused to pay Moscow the tributes it had received from his predecessor. In about 1581, the Stroganovs invaded the khanate of Sibir from a base in Tiumen', with an army of 500

Cossacks led by a former pirate, Ataman Ermak.<sup>8</sup> By the end of 1583, Ermak’s small army had defeated Kuchum at his capital, Isker, near modern Tobolsk. They secured the Tsar’s reluctant blessing for the enterprise with a gift of 2,400 sables, 800 black fox furs, and 2,000 beaver pelts. Almost immediately, Tsar Ivan added to his many titles that of “Tsar of Siberia.”<sup>9</sup> Within two years, Ermak himself, and most of his men, had succumbed to a grueling guerrilla counter-attack. Ermak drowned in the Irtysh river in 1585, fleeing from an ambush.<sup>10</sup>

Soon other armed groups from Muscovy secured control of the Irtysh river and began building forts (*ostrogi*) throughout western Siberia, as Kuchum’s power and prestige evaporated. The most important new fort was at Tobolsk. In 1601, Mangazeia was founded in the heart of Samoyed territory, giving access to the Yenisei river system. In 1604 Tomsk was founded on the Tom, a tributary of the Ob river system. By 1620 there were already 50 fortified settlements in Siberia. The pattern of control established early in the seventeenth century would be reproduced many times. As military bases, forts could be used in defense or during pacification campaigns. But they also functioned as customs posts, choke points, and warehouses for the tribute or *iasak*. Soon, like the forts of the Pontic steppes, they began to attract peasant migrants. Within 50 years, this expanding network of strongpoints and safe houses would embrace most of Siberia (Map 8.1).

Colonization paid handsomely, even in the inhospitable far north, where the furs were thicker and more valuable, and could be transported by sea to



**Map 8.1** Russian conquest of Siberia along riverways. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, 71.

Archangel. Fur revenues increased by three times between 1589 and 1605, and eight times more by the 1680s.<sup>11</sup> Such vast profits drove expansion even during the Time of Troubles, luring merchants and soldiers further east as local supplies of high-quality furs were exhausted. By the middle of the seventeenth century, supplies of furs were already declining in western Siberia, along the Yenisei by the 1670s, and in Yakutia by the 1680s, driving Muscovite fur traders further and further east into what would eventually be known as the Far East.

Turukhansk, the first large fort on the Yenisei river, was founded in 1607. (It would later become a place of exile, with many distinguished “guests,” including Stalin.) Novokuznetsk (Kuznetsky Ostrog) was founded in 1618 on the Tom river, in what is today a major coal mining region, the Kuznetsk basin or Kuzbass. Yeniseisk was founded in 1619 where the Yenisei joins the Tunguska, a tributary flowing from Lake Baikal. Lake Baikal was reached in 1631 and Yakutsk was founded in 1632 on the next major river system, that of the Lena. The vast Lena system of rivers dominated what came to be known as eastern Siberia, whose main city, Irkutsk, was founded in 1652. In 1641, a detachment of Cossacks under Ivan Moskvitin reached the Sea of Okhotsk. By 1690 Muscovy controlled most of far eastern Siberia, with the exception of the Amur region, Kamchatka, and Chukhotka.

The arrival of Muscovite merchants and soldiers transformed Siberia fast. In 1600 just a few thousand Russians lived in Siberia. By 1700, there were at least as many immigrants from Russia as there were indigenous Siberians, perhaps as many as 200,000 or 300,000.<sup>12</sup> For millennia, Siberian communities had been largely independent, whether in the vast coniferous forests or taiga, or in the tundra lands of the far north where many herded reindeer. Now, within just a century, one of the largest regions of Inner Eurasia had been incorporated within a single empire. The Muscovite conquest of Siberia was as astonishing (and as destructive) as the creation of the Mongol Empire or the Spanish Empire in the Americas. And, as in the Americas, diseases such as smallpox, typhus, and syphilis often proved more ruinous to local populations than military conquest.

Merchants and officials had many ways of extracting furs.<sup>13</sup> They included gift exchanges, the taking of hostages, intervention in local feuds, which encouraged local groups to help Muscovite forces against their own enemies, and all the myriad tricks of colonialism in regions without complex state structures. The government secured furs through a 10 percent levy on the fur trade. But it also traded furs on its own account, and on privileged terms. The simplest way of extracting furs was also the oldest: Muscovite officials inserted themselves within ancient networks of tribute or *iasak*. They demanded between 1 and 12 sable pelts (or their equivalent) from every male over 15, required oaths of loyalty, and took chiefs or their family members as hostages to ensure payment.<sup>14</sup>

This was resource mobilization of the most brutal kind – Siberia’s equivalent to serfdom, which was never formally imposed on the region. And, just as wealthy landlords understood the value of treating their serfs well, so, too, Muscovite officials understood that, if used too crudely, the *iasak* system could ruin potential tax payers, so they continually exhorted officials to treat the natives

kindly. Such exhortations had little effect because officials in Siberia knew that their own fate depended on the size of the tributes they exacted. But for the government, Siberian *iasak* payers were as important, in their way, as Russian tax payers, and sometimes Muscovite courts came down heavily on Russians who abused natives.<sup>15</sup>

Until the time of Peter the Great, no systematic attempt was made to civilize, Europeanize, or Christianize the local population. Formal missionary work began only in the early eighteenth century, when Peter appointed a bishop of Tobolsk, who was told to destroy pagan idols and baptize the local Ostiak people.<sup>16</sup> Peter ordered the shaving of beards and the introduction of European clothing, civilizing projects that he had also imposed on his Russian subjects. In remote regions, conversion, like the payment of tributes, was often enforced by the crudest of means. One priest, Father Pykhov, described some of his methods:

In the last year of 1747, ... I beat the new Christian, Ostiak Fedor Senkin, with a whip, because he married his daughter off at the said time and celebrated the wedding feast during the first week of Lent. I also beat his ... son-in-law with a whip, because he buried his deceased son himself, outside of the church and without the knowledge of the priest. ... Semen Kornilov Kortyshin was beaten with a whip because he never went to the holy church ... I also beat the widow Marfa and her son Kozma with a whip ... because ... they kept in their tent a small stone idol, to whom they brought sacrifices.<sup>17</sup>

Locals claimed that, if offered a large enough bribe, the same priest often permitted traditional funerals.

Cossacks, officials, and merchants were followed by peasant farmers and exiles, and as early as the late seventeenth century, peasants (or farming Cossacks) outnumbered other groups of immigrants. The government was keen to settle peasants mainly to supply local garrisons and officials with food. But their arrival disrupted the lives of indigenous populations as they plowed up traditional hunting lands and introduced terrifying new diseases.<sup>18</sup> Peasant migrants generally brought the lifeways, agricultural methods, and housing styles of their Russian or Ukrainian homelands, so that Siberian villages often looked like villages in Inner Eurasia's western heartland.

Many settlers were simply ordered to Siberia. These included Cossacks, many of whom settled permanently, and foreign prisoners of war, often known as "Lithuanians" because so many came from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the seventeenth century, Siberia began to be used as a place of exile after the 1649 law code formalized Siberian exile as a punishment for criminal offenses. In the second half of the century, almost 30,000 people were exiled to Siberia. Other settlers fled the increasingly onerous burdens of serfdom to become Siberian "state peasants."<sup>19</sup> Old Believers also fled to Siberia, though many were sent as exiles, including the most famous religious dissident of the period, Avvakum. One final group of immigrants were women, forced or encouraged to settle in Siberia to correct the extreme gender imbalance among Russian settlers.<sup>20</sup>



Expansion into Siberia brought Muscovy into contact with new peoples and polities, first the Oirat and Khalkha Mongols, and eventually Qing China.

As early as 1616, Sholoi Ubashi Khunt-Taiji (1567–1623?), a prince of the Khotoghoid Oirat Mongols, asked Muscovy for guns and gunpowder.<sup>21</sup> In 1647, Muscovy signed a treaty with the founder of the Oirat (Zunghar) Empire, Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji (r. 1635–1653), permitting free trade between Mongols and Siberian natives and agreeing to share the resulting tributes.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually, Muscovy entered China's sphere of influence and here it met up with another gunpowder empire. The first Muscovite agent to enter China was Ivan Petlin, who traveled from Tomsk to Beijing in 1618.<sup>23</sup> Petlin's report, written in 1619, is the earliest surviving Russian eyewitness account of China. The next formal Muscovite mission to China left in 1653, and was followed by two more in 1658 and 1668, led by a Bukharan trader from Tomsk, Setkul Ablin.<sup>24</sup> As North American furs glutted European markets, Siberian merchants began to eye the Chinese market. Direct trade between Muscovy and China began from the late 1630s, along several routes. Before 1689, merchants from Muscovy (many of Central Asian origin) traded in the huge market at the salt Lake of Yamysh in Zungharia, where they met Central Asian and Oirat merchants bringing Chinese goods such as silks, linen, rhubarb, tea, and porcelain. From the 1650s goods also began to travel through Irkutsk and Mongolia, and eventually through western Manchuria along tributaries of the Amur river.<sup>25</sup>

The first military clashes between China and Muscovy occurred in the 1650s, after Erofei Khabarov led an expedition from Yakutsk to the Amur river. Though the battlefield was remote, both armies were equipped with the most up-to-date gunpowder technologies and fortification technologies.<sup>26</sup> In 1652, Manchu troops unsuccessfully attacked Khabarov's camp at the abandoned Dahur town of Albazin, and by the 1670s Albazin had become a powerful symbol of Muscovite power in the region. But with both armies at the end of long, fragile, and costly supply lines, diplomacy proved as important as arms. Moscow was more interested in trade than conquest, while the Chinese hoped for Moscow's military neutrality in its looming conflicts with the expanding Oirat Empire (which are described later in this chapter).

Inner Eurasia's two superpowers had a lot to learn about each other. In 1674, Nikolay Gavrilovich Miliescu, a Moldavian Greek educated in Constantinople, led a Muscovite embassy to China.<sup>27</sup> At the Chinese border he was met by a Chinese official, Mala. The two exchanged diplomatic niceties that illustrate the delicacy of these first diplomatic encounters, and the mutual ignorance of Inner Eurasia's two superpowers. In Beijing, Miliescu was presented to Emperor Kangxi. He agreed reluctantly to most Chinese ceremonial demands, including the kowtow, though he insisted on bending down unusually rapidly.<sup>28</sup> The Chinese treated the mission with the suspicion they reserved for most trade missions from the steppes.

In 1685, Chinese troops forced the Muscovite garrison at Albazin to surrender. These events were the prelude to the treaty of Nerchinsk, negotiated in August and September of 1689. The treaty marked a fundamental turning point in relations between Muscovy and China and in the history

of Inner Eurasia as a whole. As a Mongolian historian has noted, the treaty demonstrated that the steppe heartlands of the regions had now become “a peripheral region lying between two regional world empires.”<sup>29</sup> The treaty also began to change the very idea of borders and territoriality throughout eastern and central Inner Eurasia, by introducing for the first time the sedentary ideal of precisely definable borders between polities, borders that could be described by lines on a map.<sup>30</sup>

China was keen to keep Muscovy neutral after the military victories of the Oirat ruler, Galdan, in 1688, and its officials were beginning to understand the extent of Muscovy’s power. At the fortified town of Nerchinsk, the two delegations met in 1689 on terms of scrupulous symbolic equality. Each delegation had exactly the same number of men. Their guards were only allowed to carry swords and were searched for concealed weapons. And the ambassadorial tents were placed so that the ambassadors could each sit in their own tents while they met, which avoided forcing one delegation to visit the other first. The ritual duel continued at the first meeting, on August 22.

The Russians approached the meeting tents with great pomp and circumstance. They paraded their soldiers with drums, fifes, and bagpipes, and the ambassador and his staff rode up on horseback dressed in their finery, with much cloth of gold and black sable fur in evidence. The Russian tent was floored with Turkish carpets, and a silk-and-gold Persian carpet covered the ambassador’s table, upon which stood his papers, an inkstand, and a clock. The Manchus had approached the tents with equal pomp, “in all their Robes of State, which were Vests of Gold and Silk Brocade, embroider’d with Dragons of the Empire,” but upon hearing of the Russians’ regalia, the Manchus decided to use understatement to symbolize their magnificence. They removed all marks of dignity except one great silk umbrella carried before each official.<sup>31</sup>

The first negotiations between Russia and China were conducted in Latin. The Chinese had two Jesuit translators, one French, the other Portuguese. The Muscovite delegation had a Polish translator of Latin.

With the preliminary rituals completed, Muscovy and China proceeded to carve up much of northeastern Inner Eurasia. Muscovy kept Nerchinsk, but gave up Albazin and all claims on Mongolia. This consigned Mongolia to the Chinese cultural, political, and commercial sphere until the twentieth century. Moscow also promised to remain neutral in the wars between the Qing and the Oirat Zunghar Empire. Muscovite merchants were permitted to trade in China, as long as they carried passports. Symbolically, the treaty marked a shift in Chinese foreign relations, for it was the first modern Chinese treaty that seemed to concede the equality of a foreign power.<sup>32</sup>

The new treaty reoriented Muscovite trade through eastern Inner Eurasia. By the 1690s, the Oirat wars had cut the trade routes through the Kazakh steppes, Lake Yamysh, and Zungharia. A more central route, through Yeniseisk, Irkutsk, and Mongolia, may have been used as early as 1649, when Chinese goods first appeared on markets in Yeniseisk. The first large Muscovite caravan used it in 1674. After 1727 it would become the main Russian route

to China. Bukharan merchants, who had traded in Siberia since the fourteenth century, set up warehouses and businesses in western Siberia and sent their own caravans along the route through Irkutsk. In 1686–1687 business along the route was so brisk that Irkutsk ran out of warehouse space.<sup>33</sup> Between 1690 and 1730, as war flared in Mongolia, traders from Russia began to use a route even further east, through Nerchinsk and western Manchuria.

The first formal trade mission under the new treaty left Nerchinsk in December 1689. At first the trade was open to licensed private traders, but only the richest could afford the many costs and delays, as it took at least three years to travel from Moscow to Beijing and back. The main goods exchanged were Russian furs and Chinese cloths, in particular silks, cottons, and damasks. Though limited to one or two caravans a year, the trade could be profitable. By 1700, the value of traded goods amounted to 240,000 rubles, more than the entire value of the Central Asia trade.<sup>34</sup> Some merchants continued to use the shorter route through Khuriye (Urga) in Mongolia, setting out from Irkutsk instead of Nerchinsk. Khuriye (modern Ulaanbaatar) lay at the border between the grassy northern lands of Mongolia through which horses and oxen provided transport, and the Gobi desert, where camels were the main form of transport. That made it a natural stopping point for caravans, as they switched from horses and oxen to camels, and Russian merchants were allowed to trade there from 1706.<sup>35</sup> By the second decade of the eighteenth century, there was a glut of goods on both sides, and the caravan trade declined. One of the last great caravans set out in September 1727, with 637 wagons, 1,650 horses, 565 cattle, 205 men, and goods worth over 330,000 rubles.<sup>36</sup> After long delays it reached Beijing, but most of its goods remained unsold. After 1762 the Russian government left the China trade to private merchants.<sup>37</sup>

In 1728, Russia negotiated a new treaty with China at Kiakhta, a Siberian town not far from Nerchinsk, and near the border with Mongolia (Figure 8.1). For the first time in the region's history, there appeared a fixed international border. The Kiakhta treaty allowed trade caravans, but also allowed trade at Kiakhta itself. The Russians and Chinese both had long experience of border markets, but the Kiakhta markets proved unusually successful, while the caravan trade to China withered.

Kiakhta was in many ways a typical Siberian town of the period, dominated by its fortress, with a population of officials, soldiers, artisans, and traders. It also had a Chinese settlement. A German traveler described it in 1772:

It consists of a fortress, and a small suburb ... There are three gates, at which guards are constantly stationed: ... The principal public buildings in the fortress are a wooden church, the governor's house, the customs house, the magazine for provisions, and the guard house. It also contains a range of shops and warehouses, barracks for the garrison, and several houses belonging to the crown; the latter are generally inhabited by the principal merchants ... [The Chinese town] is situated about a hundred and forty yards south of the fortress of Kiachta ... Midway between this place and the Russian fortress, two posts about ten feet high are planted, in order to mark the frontier of the two empires: one is inscribed with Russian, the other with Manshur [Chinese] characters.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 8.1** Kiakhta today. Arkady Zarubin, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiakhta#/media/File:Kyahta.s\\_gory.JPG](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiakhta#/media/File:Kyahta.s_gory.JPG). Used under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

The Kiakhta treaty of 1728 set up mechanisms to resolve further disputes, and these worked so well that the treaty stood until 1860, when the balance of power had shifted against China. Stable relations with the Russian Empire gave the Qing the freedom to impose their authority over their own borderlands, and gave Russia the time it needed to consolidate its grip on Siberia.

## *MONGOLIA: QING HEGEMONY AND THE DEFEAT OF THE ZUNGHAR EMPIRE*

The first negotiations between Russia and China took place during the huge wars between the Qing and the last great steppe empire, that of the Oirat Zunghars. Ending as they did with the destruction of the Oirat, and the empire they had created, the Zunghar wars count as a major turning point in the history of Inner Eurasia.

Mongolian history in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was shaped primarily by the Zunghar wars, the rise of the Qing dynasty in China, and the spread of Buddhism within Mongolia.

## **EASTERN MONGOLIA AND THE RISE OF THE QING**

The Qing dynasty came from the Manchurian borderlands of northeastern China, which explains why they understood the steppe world much better

than the Ming. Indeed, in some ways the Qing can be counted as one more of the China's northern dynasties, along with the Yuan. That may be why they devoted huge resources to the task of managing and eventually dominating the Mongolian steppes.

The founder of the Qing dynasty was a Jurchen leader, Nurhachi (b. 1559, r. 1616–1626), from the Manchurian borderlands. This was a region of farmers and pastoralists, with many ties to Mongolia. From the 1630s, many Khalkha Mongol leaders would support the Qing, first as military allies, but eventually as overlords and protectors of the Khalkha, particularly as the military threat grew from the rising Zunghar empire in western Mongolia. The Qing reinforced a sense of shared heritage through marriage alliances with Khalkha leaders, and cultural borrowings, including the Mongol script.

In 1636, Nurhachi's son Huang Taiji proclaimed himself emperor, renamed his dynasty the Qing (or "pure"), and accepted the submission of most Inner Mongolian leaders.<sup>39</sup> Like his father, Huang Taiji (r. 1627–1643) regarded himself as the heir of the Yuan dynasty, which implicitly gave the Mongols high status in the new empire. But the Qing would rapidly become Sinitized, and Mongolia would once again begin to look like a Chinese colony. In 1644, under Emperor Shunzhi (1643–1661), the Qing entered China and took Beijing as their capital. Nurhachi's great grandson, Kangxi, would rule China for 60 years, from 1661–1722, and the Qing dynasty would survive until 1911.

Any possibility of building an independent Mongolian Empire had probably vanished after the death, in 1634, of Ligdan Khan (b. 1588, r. 1604–1634) of the Chahar Mongols. Ligdan Khan was the last of the true Chinggisids, and the last representative of the Yuan dynasty. With his death, and the capture of his sons by Emperor Huang Taiji, the eastern Mongols lost a powerful unifying focus, and never again would Chinggisid lineage prove the key to political power in Mongolia. Two years after his death, the Qing began dividing Khalkha Mongolia into "banners" (*koshuu*, a term similar in its original usage to the older *tumen*, a military formation). Each banner was headed by a local hereditary prince or "ruling lord" (*Zasag noyon*), or by a local lamasery, and was supposed to provide about 7,500 soldiers. Banners, like the military units favored by Chinggis Khan, were military rather than tribal units, so they cut across the military authority of traditional leaders. But they were also territorial units, so they shut off traditional migration routes, which further limited the power of local leaders. Nevertheless, lamaseries and local princes remained the dominant forces in the lives of most Mongolians, as they owned large numbers of serfs, controlled traditional migration routes, and employed commoners to herd their livestock.<sup>40</sup>

In 1640, six years after Ligdan's death, and in the shadows of a rising Qing dynasty, there was one last attempt to revive pan-Mongolian solidarity at a *quriltai* held in Tarbagatai, in Zungharia. This was attended by 44 Mongolian leaders from both the Khalkha federations of the east and the Oirat in the west. The *quriltai* adopted a common legal code and agreed to adopt Buddhism, in its reformed "Yellow Hat" or dGe-lugs-pa form, as the religion of all Mongols.<sup>41</sup> The *quriltai* also agreed to punish any Mongols who attacked other Mongols.

But it could not establish a single supreme ruler, and failed spectacularly to prevent further conflicts.

In the absence of a single political and military leader, religious figures played an increasingly important role in Mongolian politics, as they did in Central Asia and Xinjiang. Even Ligdan Khan had based his political and military ambitions as much on Buddhism as on his Chinggisid genealogy, and he had been a great patron of Mongolian Buddhist scholarship.<sup>42</sup> In 1639, several Khalkha leaders accepted Zanabazar (1635–1723), the son of the Tushetu khan, as a living Buddha (or Khutugtu), and as the religious leader of all the Khalkha Mongols.<sup>43</sup> Only 4 at the time of his election, Zanabazar was sent to Tibet to study under the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682), the leader of the Yellow Hat school of Buddhism. Zanabazar came to be known as the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, from the Tibetan for “Reverend Noble One.” Because of his height, he was also known as Öndör Gegeen or “Tall Majesty.” After returning to Mongolia, Zanabazar built a lamasery in 1680, around which would grow the settlement of Khuriye (modern Ulaanbaatar). The high prestige of the new office of Jebtsundamba Khutugtu owed much to Zanabazar’s talents as a painter, a sculptor, a writer, and translator of religious texts. He also invented a new Khalkha script, the Soyombo script. Zanabazar lived for long periods near Erdeni Zuu lamasery in former Karakorum, where he built a forge and produced sculptures of remarkable beauty. His work was part of a larger flowering of Buddhist scholarship and art that followed the second conversion to Buddhism from the late sixteenth century.

Zanabazar held the office of Jebtsundamba Khutugtu until his death in 1723, and the office itself would survive for another two centuries, until 1924. The Jebtsundamba Khutugtus (often known by the Mongols as “Öndör Gegeen”) enjoyed both religious and political authority among most eastern Mongolian tribes, as Zanabazar was, technically, a Chinggisid. Over time, the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus acquired a status in Mongolia similar to that of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. They also acquired great wealth through grants of serfs.<sup>44</sup>

But Zanabazar was incapable of overcoming the political divisions that left the Khalkha vulnerable to both the Qing and the Oirat. In the 1670s and 1680s, power in Khalkha Mongolia was disputed between the western Zasagtu khan and the eastern Tushiyetu khan. When the Oirat leader Galdan, ruler of the rising Zunghar Empire, lent his support to the Zasagtu khan, the Tushiyetu khan killed both the Zasagtu khan and Galdan’s brother. This act provoked a massive Oirat invasion of eastern Mongolia in 1688, which drove most Khalkha leaders, including the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, into Inner Mongolia. Here, after an appeal from the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, Kangxi agreed to protect the Khalkha leaders and their followers.<sup>45</sup> Khalkha leaders now faced the same dilemmas as Bohdan Khmel’nitskii at the western end of Inner Eurasia, and debated whether to seek Muscovite or Chinese aid against the Oirat. But cultural links to the Qing and the closeness of Qing power decided the issue. As the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu put it, “the Manchus have the same kind of religion and wear the same clothing as the Mongols. However, the Russians have a different kind of religion. Therefore, it would be a good idea for us to submit to the Manchus.”<sup>46</sup>

In 1691, after Qing armies had repelled Galdan's invasion, most Khalkha leaders accepted Chinese suzerainty at the Convention of Dolonnor (modern Duolun) in Inner Mongolia. The gathering was summoned by Emperor Kangxi and attended by 550 Khalkha nobles, as well as by the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, Zanabazar.<sup>47</sup> Zanabazar lived in Beijing until 1701, where he became a close friend of the emperor, Kangxi. He eventually returned to Mongolia and supervised the rebuilding of the Erdeni Zuu lamasery.

The 1691 treaty of Dolonnor marks a fundamental turning point in the political history of eastern Mongolia. The submission of so many regional khans to the Qing left the spiritual authority of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu as the only unifying force in Khalkha Mongolia.<sup>48</sup>

## WESTERN MONGOLIA AND THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ZUNGHAR EMPIRE

As the Khalkha fell into the Qing orbit, the Oirat Mongols, whose lands were remote from both the Qing and Muscovite empires, built Inner Eurasia's last great steppeland empire.<sup>49</sup>

In the fifteenth century, under Esen, the Oirat had been, briefly, a major international power. But in the sixteenth century they were divided and weak, though they continued to be active along the Silk Roads, and in the trading cities of Xinjiang, from Turfan to Kashgar.<sup>50</sup> Oirat leaders granted licenses to caravans of "Bukharan" traders traveling through the Tarim basin and Zunggharia, and controlled the trade in satins and tea. Particularly important was their control of the oasis of Hami, "the door, opening and closing access to China."<sup>51</sup> The Oirats also benefited from the creation of a new, Siberian branch of the Silk Roads in the early seventeenth century. Whether driven by warmer steppeland climates or expanding commercial opportunities, Oirat populations increased in the early seventeenth century, and agriculture spread in Zunggharia. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, demographic and military pressure from the Khalkha Mongols under Altan Khan, and the Kazakh under Taulkel Khan (r. 1586–1598), drove Oirat leaders to seek new pasturelands and new opportunities to the north and west, where Muscovite expansion into Siberia was creating new markets. Eventually, these pressures would drive two major migrations out of the Oirat lands, one to the Volga region in 1630, and a second, under a group known as the Khoshut, to Tibet in 1635–1637. (The first, or Kalmyk, migration is described later in this chapter.)

Population growth played an important role in the rise of a new Oirat Empire with its heartland in Zunggharia. Several major Oirat leaders came from the relatively agrarian and urbanized Ili valley region, formerly the heartland of Qaidu's empire, for this area, though dominated by pastoralists, allowed some intensification as it contained farming regions and towns. An early seventeenth-century Oirat leader, Kharakula (d. 1634), conquered much of western Mongolia, encouraged agriculture, built a capital, and invited foreign craftsmen, including Russians. His son, Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji

(r. 1635–1653), established a unified Zunghar federation from the mid-1630s. The nineteenth-century Russian Sinologist Bichurin described Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji as the Oirat Peter the Great. He encouraged agriculture and urbanization.<sup>52</sup> In his time, and as the result of trade agreements with Muscovy, the salt-trading city of Lake Yamysh became one of the largest cities in Inner Eurasia.<sup>53</sup> He was also interested in cultural modernization. Under Khung-Taiji, many Oirat leaders adopted Tibetan Buddhism, a process aided by the fact that in 1640, at the time of the last pan-Mongolian *quriltai* in Tarbagatai, a Khoshut Oirat leader, Gushi, had become effective ruler of Tibet. Another Khoshut, Zaya Pandita (1599–1662), created an Oirat script. With his disciples, he translated much Buddhist writing into the new written language.

In 1643, Oirat armies inflicted a devastating defeat on the Kazakhs. In 1647 Erdeni Khung-Taiji negotiated a border treaty with Muscovy, dividing the Siberian tribute between the two expanding empires. (See above, p. 180.) Once again, the Oirat were becoming a significant regional power.

Khung-Taiji's second son, Galdan Boshugtu Khan (b. 1644, r. 1678–1697), was sent to study in Tibet. He returned to become the Oirat leader in 1678, with the support of the Dalai Lama. In 1678–1680, he conquered the Tarim basin and much of Zungharia. This gave him a rich revenue base and control over the trade routes between China and Central Asia. Though none of the Zunghar leaders were Chinggisids, in 1682 the Dalai Lama granted Galdan the title of “Boshugtu Khan,” or khan by divine grace, which effectively licensed him to use the title of khan.<sup>54</sup>

Like his father, Erdeni Khung-Taiji, Galdan was a modernizer. He encouraged farming and urbanization, particularly around Khulja, on the Ili river. He incorporated cannon into his armies by mounting them on camels. He supported mining for metals, and encouraged the production of gunpowder. Indeed, his interest in Xinjiang and Central Asia was motivated in part by the need for saltpeter. He minted coins and printed books in the newly invented Oirat script.<sup>55</sup> Like his predecessors, Galdan found that from Zungharia he could control the major trade routes from China to Central Asia and Muscovy.

Eventually, though, conflicts over trade created friction with both Muscovy and China. At the beginning of his reign, Galdan sent an official embassy to China, the first from the Oirats for two centuries.<sup>56</sup> The Qing reluctantly allowed it to trade. But, as had happened so many times before, the trade missions grew in size as more and more traders and Oirat leaders sought a share in their profits. Qing officials became increasingly unhappy. In southern Siberia, Galdan clashed with Muscovy, and in the 1680s he secured control of the trade routes and major trading towns of southern Kazakhstan, which gave him a choke hold on the fur roads between Central Asia and Siberia.

In 1688, Galdan invaded eastern Mongolia, to avenge the murder of his brother and his ally, the Zasagtu khan. (See above, p. 185.) He captured the monastery of Erdeni Zuu, the effective capital of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, Zanabazar, and one of the largest permanent settlements in the Khalkha lands. As we have seen, his victories eventually drove most Khalkha leaders into the arms of the Qing, at the 1691 Convention of Dolonnor. The Qing finally turned



on Galdan after signing the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, which ensured Muscovite neutrality in any wars with the Oirat.

The Qing rejected Galdan's demand that they punish the Tushetu khan for killing Galdan's brother, and began to cut back Oirat trade missions. The restrictions on trade were galling and dangerous for Galdan, whose followers resented their exclusion from the China trade.<sup>57</sup> That Galdan faced serious internal problems is shown by the defection of several Zunghar leaders, including Galdan's nephew, Tsewang Rabtan, in 1689. These splits point to one of the empire's basic weaknesses, the lack of a clear ruling lineage. Unlike Chinggis Khan, Galdan and his successors faced regular challenges from rival clans and tribes.<sup>58</sup>

As splits emerged within the Oirat leadership, the Qing emperor, Kangxi, decided on a massive mobilizational effort to crush the Zunghar Empire. Qing and Oirat armies fought an indecisive battle at Ulan Butung in 1690. But the next year, most eastern Mongol leaders accepted Qing suzerainty at Dolonnor. The Qing could now pursue the Oirat without worrying about uprisings in eastern Mongolia. In 1695, famine forced Galdan to move eastwards from the Khobdo region, probably with no more than 20,000 troops. This time, Kangxi himself led a vast army of perhaps 400,000 into Mongolia. In May 1696, at the Terelzh river near Khuriye, Kangxi's army defeated Galdan, whose forces now numbered no more than 10,000.<sup>59</sup>

The vast scale of the Qing mobilization and the huge difference in the size of the armies undoubtedly affected the outcome, but so did Chinese use of cannon, built with the help of Jesuit missionaries. But Galdan's defeat was also due to internal conflicts, as his army was demoralized and weakened by the attacks of his nephew, Tsewang Rabtan.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, moving the vast Qing army through Mongolia was costly and risky, and despite all its advantages, the Qing armies could easily have lost the battle at the Terelzh river.<sup>61</sup> If they had, lack of supplies would soon have forced them to retreat.

After his defeat in 1696, Galdan and some 5,000 followers headed west. In September, a refugee from this pathetic army reported that "Galdan was now extremely impoverished and short of supplies, that he not only lacked food, yurts and tents, but even somewhere to go, as he was surrounded on all sides. Now, he feeds himself on roots."<sup>62</sup> Famine drove soldiers to desert, and by November, Galdan had only 100 men. He died in March 1697. His opponents claimed he took poison, depriving Kangxi of the chance to publicly humiliate and execute him.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the rout of Galdan, the Zunghar Empire, protected as it was by distance, would survive for another half century. It reformed under Galdan's nephew and successor, Tsewang Rabtan (1697–1727). At first, Tsewang was conciliatory towards the Qing. He surrendered Galdan's ashes in 1698, and handed over Galdan's daughter the next year. He had little choice. His empire was impoverished by war and squeezed on three sides by Russia, the Kazakhs, and the Chinese. But soon, like his predecessors, Tsewang began to rebuild and diversify the economy, by encouraging agriculture, industry, and trade. A Russian report of 1734 noted the results a generation later.<sup>64</sup> Grain of all kinds

was widely grown, and now not just by Muslim captives but also by Zunghars. The Oirat had lots of salt to sell and produced fine vegetables. They exploited their control of the east–west trade routes by selling tea and silks westward, or importing brick tea and cloths that could be sold in Zungharia itself. Large trade missions, often headed by Central Asian (or “Bukharan”) merchants, traveled regularly to China and Tibet.

Like his contemporary, Peter the Great, Tsewang encouraged industrialization by creating iron and weapon manufactures using foreign (including Russian) experts. He also set up leather-processing and cotton cloth-making enterprises. Many of these factories probably depended, like those of Peter the Great, on forced labor. Farmers were moved from the Tarim basin to the region around modern Urumqi, and each year several hundred women were sent to Tsewang’s settlement in the Ili valley to sew uniforms for the army. In 1731 the Russian envoy, Ugrimov, met a Swede, Renat, who had been captured at the battle of Poltava and exiled to Siberia. In 1716 he was captured by the Oirat as a member of Buchholtz’s expedition to Lake Yamysh, after which he was charged with the production of cannons, powder, and mortars.<sup>65</sup> With Renat’s help, the Zunghars even printed books and produced the first modern maps of the region. According to Perdue, the Zunghar maps were more accurate and detailed than anything available to the Russians or Chinese in the eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Renat would eventually return to Sweden.

Tsewang, like Peter the Great, tried to build up industry to produce arms and uniforms for the army, and luxury goods for the Oirat ruling elite.<sup>67</sup> He rebuilt his military power from a base near Khulja in the Ili valley. In 1698, just a year after Galdan’s death, Tsewang launched devastating attacks on the Kazakhs. Twenty-five years later, in 1723, he launched new attacks that would permanently weaken the Kazakh Great Horde.<sup>68</sup> Conflicts in the Tarim basin between Ishaqiyya and Afaqiyya branches of the Naqshbandiyya prompted Tsewang to invade southern Xinjiang in 1713, to take hostages from ruling families, and exact tributes from the region’s cities. Each year, Zunghar military units arrived in the Tarim cities to exact tributes, including large amounts of silver and grain from Kashgar, and smaller levies on goods such as cotton and saffron, as well as labor services including milling and transportation.<sup>69</sup>

Competition for Siberian tributes irritated relations with the Russian Empire, but both sides benefited from increased trade between Zungharia and Siberia, and they avoided outright war. In 1717 Tsewang turned east and overran the Koko Nor region in support of the Dalai Lama, after which he seized control of Tibet. However, in 1720, Qing armies expelled the Zunghars from Tibet. From 1728 until near the end of the nineteenth century, Tibet became, in effect, a colony of the Qing Empire. This indecisive conflict, though fought mostly in Zunghar lands (Qing armies captured Hami and Turfan), was immensely costly for China, and created discontent in Khalkha Mongolia, whose populations paid for much of the Qing mobilizational effort. It also raised the prestige of the Zunghar armies. John Bell, a Scot in the service of the Russians, described a battle between the Qing and the Oirat in 1718. (See



**Figure 8.2** Giovanni Castiglione, *War Against the Oirat*. Reproduced from Golden, *Central Asia in World History*.

also Figure 8.2.) It illustrates the difficulties Qing armies faced at the end of lengthy supply lines:

the Chinese, being obliged to undertake a long and difficult march, through a desert and barren country, lying westward of the long wall; being also encumbered with artillery, and heavy carriages, containing provisions for the whole army during their march; had their force greatly diminished before they reached the enemy. The Kontaysha [Tsewang Rabtán], on the other hand, having intelligence of the great army coming against him, waited patiently on his own frontiers, till the enemy was within a few days march of his camp, when he sent out detachments of light horse to set fire to the grass, and lay waste the country. He also distracted them, day and night, with repeated alarms, which together with want of provisions, obliged them to retire with considerable loss.<sup>70</sup>

As we have seen, the essential problem for all agrarian armies in the steppes was to protect infantry armies that needed significant supplies of food and water, unlike their opponents who, as Bell pointed out, “having always many spare horses to kill and eat, are at no loss for provisions.”<sup>71</sup> Any solution depended on gaining a massive material superiority over their steppe opponents. It was necessary to devote large forces to the protection of supply trains, and, eventually, to build fortified storage areas. Since the Han era, no Chinese army managed to spend more than about three months in the steppelands, and Kangxi’s armies faced the same limitations. The Qing managed to defeat the Oirat only after overcoming this limitation by building new supply lines deep into the steppes.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, war also took its toll on the Zunghars. In 1732, Ugrimov reported that most of the men had been taken to the wars.<sup>73</sup> In 1731, Tsewang's successor, Galdan Tsereng (r. 1727–1745), defeated a Qing army. But in 1738, he negotiated a truce under which the Zunghar agreed to remain west of the Altai. There followed more than 15 years of peace early in the reign of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–1795). Zunghar attacks on the Kazakhs drove them into the arms of the Russians, as earlier Zunghar attacks had driven the eastern Mongols to seek Chinese protection. In 1731, for the first time ever, Kazakh khans formally sought Russian protection.

After the death of Galdan Tsereng in 1745, conflicts over the succession encouraged one contender, Amursana, to flee to the Qing in 1754. The emperor, Qianlong, seized on these divisions to finally crush the Zunghars. He assembled an army of perhaps 200,000, including many Mongols, in western Khalkha. In the spring of 1755, with Amursana in command of part of the army, Qing forces advanced into Zungharia as far as the Ili valley, meeting no resistance on the way. The Oirat leader Davatsii was eventually captured in Kashgar.<sup>74</sup> This was the end of the Zunghar Empire. The Chinese army distributed leaflets promising peace if Zunghars accepted that they were now Chinese citizens. Qianlong demobilized his huge and expensive army for fear of provoking new uprisings, and prepared for a meeting at Dolonnor at which he expected the Zunghar leaders to swear loyalty as the Khalkha leaders had done 60 years earlier.<sup>75</sup>

Instead, in late 1755, Amursana turned on the Chinese, slaughtered a Chinese contingent in Khulja, and began to form a new Zunghar army. Qianlong assembled a new and even larger army of some 400,000, which marched through Mongolia and into Zungharia in 1756. There was a brief uprising in Mongolia, provoked by the cost of supporting this colossal army, but Amursana failed to join it, or to create a united Zunghar army. Eventually, he fled to Russian Siberia, where he died in Tobolsk of smallpox.<sup>76</sup>

No effective Zunghar opposition remained, and the Chinese army began to exterminate the population of Zungharia. Zlatkin writes that, of a population of some 600,000 people, only 30,000–40,000 survived, and only because they fled to Russian territory; while other estimates suggest that a million Oirat may have died.<sup>77</sup> The genocide was systematically aimed at young men. One commander who had captured a group of Oirat was told by the emperor to “take the young and strong and massacre them,” and hand over the women as booty.<sup>78</sup> According to a Chinese source, 40 percent of 600,000 Zunghars died of smallpox, 20 percent fled to the Russians and Kazakhs, and 30 percent were killed by the army. So great were the losses in Zungharia that Qing officials began to plan ways of repopulating the region by settling Han peasants, Manchu bannermen, and Chinese Muslims, or Hui.<sup>79</sup> Those who fled to Russia were sent to the Kalmyk lands on the Volga if they acknowledged Christianity, but returned to Zungharia if they refused. There they faced Kazakh harassment, and many were captured and sold as slaves in Siberia.

By 1758 the conquest of Zungharia was complete. Mopping up operations drew Qing armies into the Tarim basin cities the following year, while some

Qing contingents reached Talas for the first time in 1,000 years, as well as Kokand and Tashkent.<sup>80</sup>

In the history of the last great pastoralist empire, we see several determined and skillful efforts to build a new mobilizational machine from a base in the steppes, while using many of the skills and resources of the agrarian lands and introducing modern industries. However, the military base of the empire was still the traditional *smychka*, and the Oirat failed because they could not mobilize sufficient human or material resources in a world in which populations, productivity, and military power were growing in neighboring agrarian lands, and its own territory was being squeezed on all sides. Nor did any of the leaders show the political skills needed to hold together a grand Oirat coalition. The Qing benefited both from their superiority in numbers and resources, and from divisions within the Oirat leadership.

The Zunghar Empire survived as long as it did largely because it was so far from China and Muscovy. That is also why defeating it required an exceptional mobilizational effort on behalf of the most populous state in the world. So vast was the mobilization that, for the first time ever, it allowed Chinese armies to spend more than a hundred days in the steppes.<sup>81</sup> The mobilizational achievement depended partly on the growing commercialization of the Chinese economy, which allowed the government to purchase grain over large areas without imposing excessive burdens on the peasantry of the northwestern provinces.<sup>82</sup>

As Perdue argues, the crushing of the Zunghar counts as a fundamental turning point in world history, for it marks the end of the pastoralist empires that had shaped Eurasian history for two millennia.<sup>83</sup> Defeat of the Zunghars also marks the rise of Chinese control over what would eventually become Xinjiang. The region was now more closely controlled by China than it had ever been under the Han, the Tang, or the Yuan. With control of both Mongolia and Xinjiang, China became once again a major Inner Eurasian power.<sup>84</sup>

There is a curious global coda to the history of the Zunghar Empire. Pekka Hamalainen has shown that, just as Inner Eurasia's last pastoralist empire was being crushed, North America's first pastoralist empire was being constructed by the Comanche, using horses imported to the Americas by the Spanish.<sup>85</sup> The Comanche Empire, too, was based on a sort of *smychka* that allowed highly mobile cavalry armies to generate great wealth from neighboring regions through a complex combination of trade, slave raiding, farming, and tribute exaction. The Comanche Empire survived for a century, well into the nineteenth century until it, too, was smothered by an emerging agrarian superpower, the USA.

## *CENTRAL INNER EURASIA: THE URALS AND THE KAZAKH STEPPES*

Muscovite expansion into the Urals and the Kazakh steppes was a much slower process than the conquest of Siberia, but it began in the seventeenth century.

This section surveys Muscovite relations with the Kalmyk, the Bashkir, and the Kazakh.

## THE KALMYK

Early in the seventeenth century, as the Qing and Romanov dynasties consolidated their power, the politics of the Volga region was transformed by the arrival of the Kalmyk (Turkish for “Oirat”) in the steppes north of the Caspian Sea.<sup>86</sup>

As demographic, military and political pressure increased on the pasturelands of western Mongolia, regional leaders had to plan for an uncertain future. Trade was one option available to them, but another, familiar to anyone who had joined a raiding party, was to take over the pasturelands of other, weaker, groups of nomads. In 1608, a large raiding party of Khoshut Oirats moved deep into the Nogai steppes north of the Caspian Sea, where they found promising new pasturelands. In 1630–1632, a Torghut leader, Qo Orlog, who had earlier tried to negotiate trade relations with Muscovite officials in Siberia, led a much larger invasion into the Nogai steppes.<sup>87</sup> After a well-planned but difficult migration, in which they fought their way through the territory of several groups of Kazakhs, he and his followers settled north of the Caspian Sea. Here, they displaced local Nogai tribes and began to nomadize on the eastern shores of the Volga. This dangerous migration into already occupied steppe lands illustrates the increasing claustrophobia of the steppelands, as well as the growing military power of the Oirat. Oirat groups would continue to arrive in the Caspian steppes in the seventeenth century. There were particularly large migrations in the late 1670s and 1680s.

The Nogai had nomadized in the Caspian steppes for over a century, since the Muscovite conquest of Astrakhan in 1556.<sup>88</sup> The Kalmyk drove them west into the Caucasus steppes, where they became dependents and allies of the Crimean khans. The Kalmyk, once established on the Caspian steppe, built an effective new *smychka*, based mainly on the exploitation of looting zones. They raided widely, sometimes into Muscovite territory, but more often towards Khiva or the Caspian or Pontic steppes.

The Kalmyk so disrupted trade between Central Asia and the Black Sea region that Moscow received appeals from Bukhara, Khiva, and Balkh to form an anti-Kalmyk alliance. In the 1620s, the Kalmyk seized pasturelands on either side of the southern Volga in the former heartlands of the Golden Horde. From here, they looted the lower Volga area and northwards into Bashkiria in the Urals, and even into southern Siberia. Their first serious defeat came in 1644, when a Kalmyk army was trapped in the mountains of the north Caucasus and largely destroyed, along with its leader or *tayishi*, Qo Orlog. The Kalmyk snubbed Muscovy’s first attempts at negotiation in 1648, claiming that they occupied Nogai lands by right of conquest. In 1651 the Kalmyk inflicted a massive defeat on Crimean and Nogai forces.

In 1655, the Kalmyk leaders signed a treaty or *shert*’ with Moscow, a symbolic act made more palatable for the Kalmyk by treating the Tsar of Muscovy as the legitimate successor of Jochi, and therefore a Chinggisid. For Moscow,

alliances with the Kalmyk and the Don Cossacks were attractive, because they offered dangerous cavalry allies for the wars with Poland and Turkey that were inevitable after Moscow's entry into Ukraine in 1654. But managing these new alliances would prove a complex task, with endless possibilities for misunderstanding, deceit, and conflict. The Russian translation of the 1655 *shert* implied Kalmyk subordination, though documents signed along with the treaty allowed the Kalmyk to interpret it as an alliance of equals. Moscow granted the Kalmyk use of pasturelands along the Volga, ordered Muscovite and Bashkir forces not to attack the Kalmyk, and allowed the Kalmyk to trade in the towns of the southern Volga. In 1657 Crimea offered the Kalmyk an alliance, after which Moscow improved its terms, sending the leading Kalmyk *tayishis* rich gifts, permission to use more pasturelands, and the right to trade duty-free in nearby towns. In 1660 Muscovy signed a new treaty with the Kalmyk, sweetened with gifts, but including the demand that the Kalmyk submit hostages. "Step by step," writes Khodarkovsky, "the Kalmyks were embarking on a slippery road that would inevitably lead to their growing dependence on Moscow."<sup>89</sup>

In 1664, Moscow sent symbols of office to a new chief *tayishi*, including a gilded silver mace. The symbolism clearly implied that the Tsar had the right to confirm the Kalmyk ruler in office, just as Moscow had assumed the right to appoint Cossack atamans. In 1669, a new *tayishi*, Ayuka, signed new treaties. These contained further restrictions, including permission to trade only in Astrakhan and Moscow, and bans on diplomatic contacts with Muscovy's enemies. Kalmyk power was at its height during Ayuka's long reign, from 1670–1724. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the Kalmyk counted as a major military power and received delegations from Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and even Qing China.<sup>90</sup>

Eventually, though, Kalmyk power would be undermined by the same slow advance of fortified lines that would tame their Kazakh and Bashkir neighbors. Under Peter I, Muscovy began to build new fortified lines in the Volga, Bashkir, and Kazakh steppes. These limited the freedom of movement of Kalmyk armies and, like a vast *guliai-gorod*, they also provided protection for a slow advance by Russian settlers. The Tsaritsyn line, completed in 1718, linked the Don to the Volga, cutting off migration and trade routes from the Caucasus to the north. The Russian government controlled trade through these lines, only allowing registered merchants to trade with the Kalmyk. In the background, under the partial protection of the new fortified lines, settlers encroached on what had once been Kalmyk pasturelands, coming from Don Cossack villages, from fishing villages along the Volga, and even, later in the eighteenth century, from German immigrants.<sup>91</sup>

After the 1720s, the unity and power of the Kalmyk declined precipitously as Russian settlers and forts closed in on their pasturelands. Impoverished Kalmyk began to seek work in Russian towns or manufactures. In 1771, most of the remaining Kalmyk – about 150,000 people or 31,000 households – took the desperate gamble of heading back east on the promise of a Qing welcome in Zungharia, which was now depopulated after the defeat of the Zunghar Empire. Once again, the Kalmyk embarked on a terrifying long march through the territory of their old enemies, the Kazakh. Only a third survived. About 11,000

households had stayed behind in Kalmykia, and when these, too, attempted to emigrate, the Russian authorities persuaded them to stay by offering lavish gifts. The remaining Kalmyk became integrated more fully within the Russian administrative system and large areas of Kalmyk pasturelands were opened to peasant settlers.

## THE 1730s: THE CONQUEST OF BASHKIRIA AND THE URALS

In the 1730s, the Russian Empire established its control over the Urals region, with its valuable agricultural lands, its furs, and its mineral wealth.

The Bashkir were a diverse group of mainly Turkic-speaking peoples, who had adopted steppe forms of Islam in the fourteenth century and lived on both sides of the Urals mountains. They included pastoralists in the south, and forest peoples in the north, many of whom spoke Finno-Ugric languages, and depended on hunting, the taking of furs, and fishing and beekeeping. In the seventeenth century, the Bashkir occupied a much larger region than today's Bashkir autonomous republic, whose capital is Ufa. Much of their land had fallen within the Kazan khanate, and then the Siberian khanate, between the Volga, Yaik (Ural after 1775), and Tobol rivers.

The conquest of Bashkir territory transformed Russian relations with all peoples east of the Volga. The key change was the decision in the 1730s to build a new line of forts running east from the Volga, around the southern end of the Urals, and up into the Kazakh steppes and southern Siberia. This was the so-called Orenburg line (Map 8.2). Ivan Kirilov, the official who masterminded these schemes, argued for a more active imperialism in the steppes. He compared Russian penetration of Central Asia to Spanish conquest of the Americas, arguing that if Russia did not act others might conquer the region first. Bashkir territory also yielded large amounts of furs, and included important routes to Siberia and major iron and copper manufacturies. By 1762, Bashkiria contained over 50 iron smelters and mills and almost 50 copper smelters and produced 70 percent of the empire's iron and 90 percent of its copper.<sup>92</sup>

Muscovy had started building forts on Bashkir territory soon after the conquest of Kazan'. Most were paid for by imposing onerous tributes on the local population. A governor of Ufa warned in the seventeenth century that overzealous tribute collectors had seized horses and beaver pelts from local communities, and taken women and children as hostages, which threatened to drive away tribute-paying communities.<sup>93</sup> Even more damaging was the influx of settlers that followed the building of Russian forts. Early in the seventeenth century, Moscow ordered a governor of Ufa to keep peasant migrants out of Bashkir lands:

these migrant Russian, Tatars, Chjuvashes, Cheremises, and Votiaks settled in many villages in their [the Bashkirs'] ancient territory. They ploughed the fields and cut the hay, cut down much of the forest including good bee trees ... and because of the great number of people in their territory, the wild animals ... have fled and the beaver have been wasted. They have begun to kill the animals and catch the fish and there is no place for the horse herds and cattle.<sup>94</sup>





**Map 8.2** Russian expansion in Bashkiria and the Kazakh steppes, eighteenth century. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, 188.

A rebellion broke out in 1705, when the Bashkir chose an ambitious new khan, Sultan Murat. In 1708 Bashkir armies approached Kazan'. But the Bashkir suffered from both political and military divisions and their armies were soon crushed. With weak traditions of leadership, their soldiers fought with little cohesion. They normally fought on horseback, using bows, arrows, and sabers, and Russian units learnt to attack them after winter when their horses were poorly fed.<sup>95</sup>

To secure control of the Urals region, Russia planned new forts, mainly at strategic river crossings which acted as natural borders between different peoples. Forts at such points provided diplomatic bases for gift-giving and negotiations with local chiefs, and also staging points for punitive raids. The planned Orenburg line of forts was intended to cut the Bashkirs off from the Caspian and Kazakh steppe, while earlier lines had already cut them off from Kazan'. In 1734, the Empress Anna dispatched to Ufa a large expeditionary force, the "Orenburg Expedition," led by Ivan Kirilov. Its composition reflected the growing influence of Enlightenment-era thinking in Russia. It included, as well as soldiers, "a geologist, a pharmacist, a botanist, a historiographer, an artist, several office clerks, a surgeon, a priest, several

students from the Greek–Latin–Slavonic Academy, and a number of army officers.”<sup>96</sup> In August, Kirilov laid the foundations for the new fortified town of Orenburg (called Orsk after 1743, when Orenburg was moved further west on the Ural river), at the junction of the Ural and Or rivers.

Bashkir leaders understood all too well the real significance of the Orenburg Expedition. In August 1734, they nearly destroyed a Russian detachment, prompting the dispatch of a much larger military force, and igniting a brutal five-year war in which Bashkir soldiers fought on both sides. Russian forces massacred the inhabitants of several Bashkir villages. But fort-building proceeded rapidly in 1735 and 1736, slowly tipping the military balance of power. By 1738 most Bashkir had submitted. A new uprising in 1740 prompted even more vicious retaliation. Urusov, the Russian commander, claimed that by September 1740, 1,702 Bashkir had been killed or had fled, 432 had been executed, 1,862 had been sent to Russia as serfs, 301 had been knouted and had their noses cut off, while 107 villages had been burned and lots of livestock had been seized. The new Russian governor estimated that 30,000 Bashkir had died out of a population of about 100,000. The real toll was probably much higher, magnified by deaths from starvation, disease, and cold.<sup>97</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Russia had completed a further line of forts extending southwards from the Urals to the Caspian Sea. This cut migratory routes through the “Ural gates” that had been used by pastoralists for several millennia.<sup>98</sup> Russia now abandoned its more northerly line of forts in the Urals, having moved its military frontier some 500 kilometers south in just a few years.

## THE KAZAKH STEPPES

Like the Chinese, Russia managed relations with nomadic peoples through trade as well as war. While Muscovite forces were crushing the Bashkir, trade boomed at Russia’s new forts on the edge of the Kazakh steppes. Russia allowed both the Kazakh and the Kalmyk to trade without paying the customs duties demanded from Russian and foreign merchants. Forts and Kazakh protection provided enough security to attract merchants from as far afield as Kashgar, Bukhara, and Khiva to trade at new towns such as Orsk, Orenburg, and Semipalatinsk. Later in the century, Orenburg overtook Astrakhan as the largest entrepot for trade in and beyond the western Kazakh steppes.<sup>99</sup>

Huge caravans of 500 or more camels loaded with merchandise and silver traversed the Kazakh steppe between Orenburg, Khiva, and Bukhara. The safe passage of these caravans depended on their protection by local Kazakh and Kalakalpak leaders, some of whom exacted a safe passage fee, while others preferred to rely on presents and access to Russian markets as a reward.<sup>100</sup>

These profitable trades gave Russian officials great influence in the steppes.

While most of the populations of the three Kazakh hordes nomadized, their khans, like the khans of Crimea, were more urbanized, and often resided in the commercial cities of the Syr Darya. In the early eighteenth century, the Lesser

Horde used pastures north-east of the Caspian Sea, along the Emba and Yaik rivers. It could field about 30,000 warriors. The Middle Horde, which occupied the central and northern Kazakh steppes, could field about 20,000 warriors. And the Greater Horde, whose lands in Semirechie bordered on Oirat lands in Zungharia, could field about 50,000. In 1691, Oirat envoys told the governor of eastern Siberia in Irkutsk that the Kazakh controlled 11 major towns including Turkestan (formerly Yasi), which was the residence of the khan of the Greater Horde throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>101</sup>

As Russian, Kalmyk, and Oirat pressure increased, trade became increasingly important for Kazakh leaders. Caravans traveled through the steppes from Central Asia to the Urals, Kazan', and Russia, to the fortified cities of southern Siberia, and eastwards through Semirechie, Zungharia, and Kansu to China. The Siberian caravans were particularly important after the Kalmyk migrations of the early seventeenth century cut traditional caravan routes to Central Asia through Astrakhan. Eventually, after an expedition into the eastern Kazakh steppes led by Buchholtz in 1716, Russia began building a new line of forts from Omsk (1716), along the Irtysh river, to Semipalatinsk (modern Semey), whose fort was completed in 1718. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this line, and the line of Urals forts running south from Uralsk to the Caspian Sea, had woven a noose around the entire Kazakh steppe. (See Map 11.1 for the line of forts.)

As the Russian presence in Siberia grew, trade with Bukhara began to flow through the southern Siberian towns of Tobolsk and Tara. The Kazakh benefited from these trades, as all caravans through the Kazakh steppes had to pay for protection. This is why Peter described the Kazakh as "the key and the gates to all of Asia."<sup>102</sup>

To their east, the Kazakh faced another rising empire, the Oirat. In 1643, Oirat armies under Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji, the father of Galdan Khan, led the first major Oirat expedition into Semirechie, defeating Kazakh armies under Khan Jahangir (d. 1652). In 1681, under Galdan Khan, the Oirat renewed their attacks on the Kazakh Great Horde, and over the next four years they seized much of the southern Kazakh steppes. This gave the Oirat temporary control not only of the eastern branch of the Silk Roads, but also over parts of the new, northern branches from Bukhara to Siberia.<sup>103</sup>

The defeat of Galdan in 1696 temporarily eased Oirat pressure, and the Kazakh hordes united once more under Sultan Tawke (r. 1680–1715). In Kazakh tradition, Sultan Tawke is regarded as the creator of the most important Kazakh code of laws, the "*Zhety Zhargy*" or "Seven Laws." This was probably drawn up in the last third of the seventeenth century, during the Oirat wars.<sup>104</sup> But in 1723, after the revival of Oirat power, Sultan Tawke's successor, Pulat Khan (1718–1730), suffered a massive defeat near Talas at the hands of Galdan's successor, Tsewang Rabtan (1697–1727). The Oirat sacked several Syr Darya cities including Turkestan and Tashkent. These defeats are known in Kazakh histories as "the great calamity." Retreating Kazakh armies and their herds inflicted great damage on major Central Asian cities, including Samarkand and Khiva.

The Oirat threat drove Kazakh leaders to formally seek Russian protection for the first time, an event that marks a fundamental shift in power relations in the Kazakh steppes. Khan Abulkhair of the Lesser Horde (r. 1718–1748) accepted Russian overlordship in 1731, realizing that his 400,000 followers could no longer maintain secure migration routes without Russian goodwill. In 1726, he asked permission to enter Russian territory. In 1730, Empress Anna Ioannovna granted his request for Russian citizenship, on terms similar to those granted earlier to the Bashkir and Kalmyk. Many of Abulkhair's nobles opposed these negotiations, fearing that they not only dishonored the Kazakh, but also weakened them commercially and militarily. Russia now required the Kazakh to protect and guide Russian caravans, and accept Russian instructions about their migration routes.

Russian negotiations with Kazakh leaders proved extremely important and we have detailed notes on them from Mohammed Tevkelev, a Russian translator and diplomat, and a Muslim Tatar. It was during these negotiations that the idea first surfaced of building a fort at the Or river (later Orenburg/Orsk) where Kazakhs could trade with Russian merchants. In 1733, Tevkelev prepared a formal memorandum recommending the building of a fort at Orenburg, under the pretense that it had been requested by the Kazakh. These ideas would shape Russian policy in the region for many decades.<sup>105</sup> In 1732 and 1740, the khans of the Middle Horde made similar agreements on behalf of their 500,000 odd followers, though, like all Kazakh khans, they lacked the authority to enforce such agreements on their followers.<sup>106</sup>

It would take almost a century before the Russian Empire could claim secure control of the Kazakh steppes. But these early concessions undermined the already limited power of Kazakh khans. By the middle of the eighteenth century, no Kazakh groups could flourish without Russian support and goodwill.

## TRANSOXIANA

After the end of the Shibanid dynasty in 1598, Transoxiana was divided between regional dynasties based in Bukhara, Khiva, and eventually Kokand. These dynasties would dominate the region for over two centuries. The khanates (or emirates, as many rulers were not Chinggisids) should not be thought of as territorial states. Each dynastic system teetered perpetually on the brink of fragmentation, in a world of constantly shifting alliances in which many regional leaders claimed Chinggisid heritage. Like earlier polities in Transoxiana, the three major dynasties ruled city-based mobilizational systems, and had to continuously negotiate for influence over outlying towns and cities and regional steppe armies. As a result, the borders of the new khanates were neither clear nor stable, and their power waxed and waned, depending on the skills of particular rulers, and changes in the productivity of agriculture and the profitability of international commerce.

In Bukhara, Jani Muhammad, a Chinggisid and the son of a refugee from the Russian conquest of Astrakhan, seized power in 1599. The Janids or Ashtarkhanids would rule Bukhara until the mid-eighteenth century. The first

powerful Ashtarkhanid khan, Imam-Kuli (1611–1641), drove the Kazakh out of Tashkent in 1613, undertook repairs to Bukhara's irrigation systems, and maintained stability during a long reign. But he made little effort to enforce his authority over regional Uzbek chiefs. He was aware of the rising power of Muscovy, and made efforts to contact Moscow, even promising to release Slavic slaves. The first mission, sent in 1613 during the Time of Troubles, was stopped before it got to Moscow. A second mission, dispatched in 1619, prompted a return mission from Moscow, led by Ivan Koxhlov. Unfortunately, Koxhlov's reports on Transoxiana were so hostile that they discouraged Muscovy from sending of further missions.<sup>107</sup>

Imam-Kuli eventually went blind, abdicated in favor of his younger brother, and set off on a pilgrimage to Mecca. That journey took him through Persia, where a still-surviving portrait of him was painted.<sup>108</sup> Later, Bukhara's irrigation systems fell into disrepair, which may help explain the appearance of economic decline suggested by debasement of the coinage.<sup>109</sup> In the early eighteenth century Bukharan power fragmented, leaving a network of city-states that owed merely nominal obedience to Bukhara.<sup>110</sup> After 1709, Bukhara lost control of the Fergana valley, which eventually became the independent khanate of Kokand.

In 1740, the Persian leader Nadir Shah (r. 1736–1747) launched a series of devastating invasions of Transoxiana, which mark a turning point in Central Asian history.<sup>111</sup> From this point on, non-Chinggisid rulers would become increasingly important. Symbolically, at least, these changes mark the end of the Chinggisid dynastic era in Central Asia. The last Chinggisid khan of Bukhara was murdered in 1747.

Bukhara itself became increasingly conservative and theocratic in its attitudes and methods of rule:

the city and khanate crystallized into an almost classical pattern of a Muslim polity of its time, cherishing and even enhancing traditional values while ignoring or rejecting the vertiginous changes initiated by the Europeans but now reaching other parts of the world. Most khans, especially the virtuous Abdalaziz (ruled 1645–81), were devout Muslims who favored the religious establishment and adorned Bukhara with still more mosques and madrasas.<sup>112</sup>

The arts and theology thrived while political power decayed. Though Bukhara flourished as a center of crafts, political fragmentation reduced regional trade, as regional chiefs levied local tolls. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Khan Abulfayz controlled little beyond his royal palace. Nevertheless, Bukhara remained an important center of international trade. A late eighteenth-century observer noted that "there is always a multitude of people from Persia, India, China, Kokand, Khujand, Tashkent and Khiva, as well as Russian Tatars, Georgians and various nomadic peoples," and it was even possible to find European clocks and Frankish brocades.<sup>113</sup>

Further north, Khorezm had long threatened to break from Bukhara's control. In 1619, Khan Arab Muhammad I (r. 1603–1623) established a new Shibaniid dynasty of Khorezmian rulers, the Yadigard, with its capital at Khiva.

The Yadigard dynasty would survive until the early eighteenth century. Turbulence in the steppes and in the Syr Darya cities controlled by the Kazakh reduced the flows of commercial wealth that had traditionally sustained the wealth and power of Khorezm. But Khiva remained active in the slave trade. Though its ruling elites were mainly Uzbek, the khanate's population of about 700,000 people included a huge, and mainly Iranian, slave population.<sup>114</sup> Slaves were used partly to maintain Khiva's extensive system of irrigation canals, which covered hundreds of kilometers, allowed the production of wheat, fruit, and cotton, and probably supported two thirds of the khanate's population.<sup>115</sup>

Khiva was the most ecologically and politically compact of the Central Asian khanates. But it faced constant pressure from Turkmen nomads on its borders, who often enjoyed the support of Sufi holy men.<sup>116</sup> Rulers negotiated military coalitions with Turkmen tribes, but this was never easy because the Turkmen, unlike most Inner Eurasian pastoralist groups, had extremely egalitarian tribal structures. Blood-money payments, for example, were the same for all Turkmen, unlike other steppe regions, in which they varied according to the status of those involved. Political egalitarianism explains why the Turkmen rarely had strong leaders except in times of war, when they would elect wartime leaders or *serdars*, who were sometimes known as "khans."<sup>117</sup>

Abulghazi Bahadur Khan (r. 1643–1663), the son of the founder of the Yadigard dynasty, was an able soldier as well as a historian. Like Babur, he wrote in Turkic, a reflection of the fact that the population of Khiva, unlike that of Bukhara, was mostly Turkic speaking. Also like Babur, he had traveled widely in his youth, in Transoxiana, Persia, and even to the Kalmyk lands.<sup>118</sup> The last effective Yadigard khan was Shir Ghazi (1715–1728), who successfully defeated a Russian military expedition of 300 men, sent by Peter the Great in 1717–1718, and led by Bekovich Cherkasskii. That expedition reflected Peter's over-ambitious dreams of building a trading empire from Russia through Central Asia to India.<sup>119</sup>

To the east, in the Ferghana valley, as the reach of Bukhara's Ashtarkhanid rulers declined, a third new khanate broke away in 1710: the khanate of Kokand. It was created by Shahrukh Biy, a non-Chinggisid Uzbek tribal leader from the so-called Ming dynasty. Kokand was founded as the regional capital in 1740. Over the next century Shahrukh Biy and his successors built a polity that was particularly powerful during the rule of Irdana Biy (1740–1769). By the end of the century, Kokand controlled the whole Ferghana region.<sup>120</sup>

East of the Pamirs, in Moghulistan/Xinjiang, Naqshbandiyya *khawajas* ruled the westernmost cities of the Tarim basin by the end of the seventeenth century. Gradually, there emerged a relatively stable pattern of rule by *khawajas*, religious teachers who claimed descent from the first four Muslim caliphs. The city-states of the region usually paid tribute to and sought alliances with pastoralist groups, many of Kyrgyz origin, in Semirechie and Zungharia. In 1678, the Oirat leader Galdan conquered the Tarim basin and began exacting tributes from its cities. After the Qing conquest of Zungharia and the Tarim basin in the 1750s, Qing officials began to refer to the entire region as Xinjiang or "the New Frontier."

What is striking about Central Asia's more urbanized regions in this period is the relative conservatism of leadership and the failure to create large or stable mobilization systems. It is possible that this reflects a failure of leadership, and indeed the rise and fall of particular regional polities did depend largely on the skills of particular leaders. But most of the difficulties were probably geographical. We have seen already how Central Asia's checkerboard geography complicated the task of mobilization, because it weakened and divided both agrarian and pastoralist polities. No oasis was large enough to impose its will permanently either on other oases or on the surrounding steppelands, while south of the Kazakh steppes, regions of steppeland were too fragmented or too arid to support large, unified nomadic confederations. Neither urban nor steppe regions could acquire a sufficient preponderance of military power or resources to build a durable regional *smychka*. This sustained ecological deadlock explains the long-standing political and military stasis in the region, and the limited scale, reach, and durability of the region's mobilizational systems.

Cultural differences between agricultural and pastoral regions also made any "yoking together" difficult. In pastoral regions, traditional tribal law (*adat*) focused on the legal rights of groups or clans rather than individuals. But in the region's towns and cities, sharia law recognized individual legal responsibility so that issues of justice involved individuals first and foremost, and individuals were punished for crimes rather than families or clans.<sup>121</sup> Property, too, was often owned by individuals in the towns. Religious traditions also differed, despite a common Islamic heritage. In the steppes, Islam took shamanic forms, largely ignoring formal theology and scholarship. Genealogies were central to steppe lifeways, and religion, too, focused largely on the honoring of ancestors whose influence remained potent.<sup>122</sup>

Lifeways and communities were very different in urban and steppe regions. Pastoralists formed camping groups linked by kinship and genealogy. In the cities, residential communities (often known as *mahallas*) were as important as genealogical communities or clans. *Mahallas* had their own walls and gates that were closed at night. They had their own mosques, bazaars, and religious schools (*maktabs*), and their own locally elected leaders (*aksakals*) as well as their own imams or mullahs. "Small lanes ... connected the main street to the ground-floor houses and inner courts. In some of these lanes, close relatives lived, with houses linked by inner doors."<sup>123</sup> The *mahallas* were often used as units of collective taxation, and large festivals or even major family events might include most members of the *mahalla*, whereas in the steppe such events were usually restricted to family members. Residence structures such as *mahallas* were much more dependent on institutionalized power structures than tribal communities, which is why we see more formal political structures in the cities. The oases were attuned to institutionalized forms of power because they needed such structures to control property rights and maintain irrigation systems, while steppe communities had much less need for institutionalized political and legal structures. As Paul Geiss writes, "What seems to be chaos and anarchy from the perspective of centralised state power, might have referred to quite ordered patterns of tribal authority relations."<sup>124</sup> Of course,

there was much interpenetration between these different traditions and life-ways, particularly when nomads settled in rural communities. Nevertheless, the differences mattered, because they complicated all attempts to yoke together these different worlds into a larger mobilization system or *smychka*.

Some scholars have offered commercial explanations for the relative decline of political power in Central Asia. In earlier periods, flows of commercial wealth had provided the basis for larger mobilization systems, so some scholars have argued that political weakness in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries arose from declining commercial flows along the Silk Roads. Lapidus argues, for example, that the decline of trade

deprived the Khans of tax revenues, the merchants of profits, and the religious elites of investment opportunities. Power drifted into the hands of tribal and *uymaq* chieftains. From the end of the Shaybanid dynasty (1598) to the nineteenth century, centralized political administration was the rare and precarious achievement of exceptionally able rulers.<sup>125</sup>

However, as Morris Rossabi points out, even if the long-distance trades along the Silk Roads did decline from the middle of the seventeenth century, local trades thrived and new, north–south routes appeared as trade began to flourish in Siberia under Muscovite rule.<sup>126</sup> In the seventeenth century, trades from Central Asia through Siberia and on to China were dominated by Central Asian merchants, often known as “Bukharans.”<sup>127</sup> To the south, trade prospered with Mughal India. During the rule of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), 100,000 Central Asian horses were exported to India each year, and caravans to India could include tens of thousands of camels and horses with cargoes that included melons and grapes.<sup>128</sup>

Seeing the history of Central Asia in this period as part of the larger history of Inner Eurasia suggests that what some have seen as the stagnation of Central Asia was really a relative phenomenon, thrown into high relief by the sustained expansion of agrarian regions such as Muscovy and the Qing Empire. In neither the steppes nor the oases of Central Asia were there similar prospects for long-term growth in human or material resources.

## NOTES

- 1 King, *Ghost of Freedom*, 21.
- 2 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 159.
- 3 The idea of “neo-Europes” is developed in Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*.
- 4 Forsyth, *History*, 75.
- 5 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 1.
- 6 There is a good short survey in Huttenbach, “Muscovy’s Penetration of Siberia.”
- 7 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 13.
- 8 On Ermak, see Sunderland, “Ermak Timofeevich”; and the account in Hartley, *Siberia*, Ch. 1.
- 9 Hartley, *Siberia*, 7.
- 10 Sunderland, “Ermak Timofeevich,” 21.



- 11 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 21.
- 12 Hartley, *Siberia*, 19, gives 100,000; Forsyth, *History*, 101 and 115, suggests that 300,000 Russians may have arrived by 1700, of which 250,000 lived west of the Yenisei.
- 13 On the origins of the Russian fur trade, Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness*.
- 14 Forsyth, *History*, 41.
- 15 See some of the examples in Kivelson, “Claiming Siberia.”
- 16 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 49.
- 17 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 51.
- 18 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 24–25.
- 19 Hartley, *Siberia*, 49.
- 20 Hartley, *Siberia*, 54.
- 21 Bawden, *Modern History of Mongolia*, 49–50; and Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 310.
- 22 Forsyth, *History*, 94; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 421; by the mid-seventeenth century, the title Khung-taiji (or Taiji), which was derived from Chinese for ‘crown prince’, had become the normal title of Oirat rulers.
- 23 Petlin’s report is reproduced in Dmytryshyn et al., *Russia’s Conquest of Siberia*, 1: 82–97; an informal mission from Ivan IV had arrived in 1567, consisting of two Cossacks; Hsü, *Rise of Modern China*, 152.
- 24 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 48–51.
- 25 On trade in this period, Burton, *The Bukharans*; on Yamysh, Mancall, *Russia and China*, 165.
- 26 Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*, 219–230.
- 27 Mancall, *Russia and China*, Ch. 3; and see Dmytryshyn et al., *Russia’s Conquest of Siberia*, 1: 398–413.
- 28 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 85–86, 94.
- 29 Nakami et al., “Mongolia,” 339.
- 30 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 353.
- 31 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 154–155.
- 32 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 130–131; but see Mancall, *Russia and China*, 159–162.
- 33 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 167.
- 34 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 186.
- 35 Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 68–69.
- 36 Mancall, *Russia and China*, 262.
- 37 Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism*, 21.
- 38 Hartley, *Siberia*, 73.
- 39 Bawden, *Modern History*, 47.
- 40 On the “banners,” see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 30–32; Sneath, “Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization,” 229–231; and Paul, *Zentralasien*, 366–368.
- 41 Bawden, *Modern History*, 55. On the history of this and later Mongolian law codes, see S. Jagchid and P. Hyer. *Mongolia’s Culture and Society*, 358–9
- 42 Bawden, *Modern History*, 34; one of his royal titles was: “Blessed Ligdan, Marvelous Chinggis Daiming Setsen, Conqueror of the Directions, Powerful Chakravarti, T’ang T’ai-tsung, God of Gods, Khormusda of all within the world, Turner of the Golden Wheel, King of the Law.”
- 43 On Zanabazar, see Ichinnorov, “Biography of Öndör Gegeen.”
- 44 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 114; and see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 271, on the 1st Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (picture of Zanabazar [271] and a sculpture attributed to him [272]); Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia’s Culture*, 282; Ichinnorov, “Biography

- of Öndör Gegeen,” also describes the history of the Mongolian “capital” from his time.
- 45 Atwood, “Dolonnur Assembly,” in *Encyclopedia*, 148.
  - 46 Onon and Pritchatt, *Asia’s First Modern Revolution*, 3.
  - 47 Bawden, *Modern History*, 79.
  - 48 Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 64.
  - 49 Map in Atwood, “Titles,” 2: 612; and Perdue, “Military Mobilization.”
  - 50 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 65.
  - 51 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 93–94; Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 65
  - 52 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 151, 163, 179–181.
  - 53 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 106–107.
  - 54 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 90.
  - 55 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 36; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 90.
  - 56 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 249.
  - 57 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 275.
  - 58 Atwood, “Titles,” 2: 619ff.
  - 59 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 304–305, 308–309.
  - 60 Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia’s Culture*, 295; Halkovic, *Mongols of the West*, 17.
  - 61 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 185–189.
  - 62 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 312.
  - 63 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 315.
  - 64 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 325, 330.
  - 65 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 331, 362–364.
  - 66 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 306–307.
  - 67 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 365.
  - 68 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 326.
  - 69 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 92.
  - 70 Cited from Perdue, *China Marches West*, 222–223.
  - 71 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 223.
  - 72 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 522.
  - 73 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 363.
  - 74 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 442–444.
  - 75 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 447.
  - 76 Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 450, 60.
  - 77 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 285, discusses what was new about this tactic and what motivated it; Zlatkin, *Istoriya*, 462; Halkovic, *Mongols of the West*, 20.
  - 78 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 283.
  - 79 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 285.
  - 80 Forsyth, *History*, 128; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 96.
  - 81 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 303.
  - 82 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 523.
  - 83 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 10–11.
  - 84 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 79.
  - 85 Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*.
  - 86 Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met*, is the best general history of the Kalmyk in this period; see also Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 133ff.
  - 87 This account based on Moses and Halkovic, *Introduction*, 114–118.
  - 88 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 288–293, on the history of the Kalmyk.
  - 89 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 137.
  - 90 Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*, 137, 39.
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- 91 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 141.
- 92 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 31, 156.
- 93 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 22–23.
- 94 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 21.
- 95 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 27.
- 96 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 65.
- 97 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 32, 38.
- 98 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 5, 12.
- 99 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 165, 29.
- 100 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 29.
- 101 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 148, 152.
- 102 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 148.
- 103 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 26.
- 104 Klyashtornyi and Sultanov, *Kazakhstan*, 315ff., for a detailed discussion (and two texts on 318–323); the code was not written down until the early nineteenth century, when it was written in incomplete versions in Russian translations, so that it is extremely hard to know how accurate existing versions really are.
- 105 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 153–154, describes these negotiations through Tevkelev's notes.
- 106 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 31, 40.
- 107 Sela, "Prescribing the Boundaries of Knowledge," 75–78.
- 108 Mukminova, "The Janids," 47.
- 109 Dale, *Indian Merchants*, 20: "The reassertion of autonomous tribal authority after 'Abd Allah Khan's death in 1598 undoubtedly meant that the total amount of irrigated land and settled agriculture increased only slowly throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century." See 30, on the debasement of the coinage after the reign of Abd Allah Khan II.
- 110 Mukminova, "The Janids," 49.
- 111 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 354, 359.
- 112 Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 177.
- 113 Mukminova, "The Janids," 51–52.
- 114 Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 45.
- 115 Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 46.
- 116 Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 47, 257.
- 117 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 100; Ch. 3 describes the acephalous structures of the Turkmen tribes in early modern times.
- 118 Soucek, *History of Inner Asia*, 183–186.
- 119 Donnelly, *Conquest of Bashkiria*, 40–41.
- 120 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 360.
- 121 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 35–38; these differences are discussed at length in Chs. 1 and 2, and see 89ff.
- 122 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 46–49.
- 123 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 87.
- 124 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 2; the term "tribe" is itself contested and subject to many different interpretations: Geiss suggests defining a tribe as an "enduring consenting group based on community of law and peace and organized along the segmentary lineage systems" (32), and in Central Asia he contrasts tribes to "residential" groups such as *mahallas* that could be found in settled regions, in which proximity was often as important as genealogy in defining membership.
- 125 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*.

- 126 Rossabi, “‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade”; and Millward, *European Crossroads*, 76–77, which argues that trade with China flourished until the mid-seventeenth century, and remained quite significant even after this date.
- 127 Burton, *The Bukharans*; see also Levi, *The Indian Diaspora*.
- 128 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 116.

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# [9] *1750–1850: EVOLUTION AND EXPANSION OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE*

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## *INTRODUCTION: GLOBAL PROCESSES AND IMPACTS*

Russian and Chinese expansion in Inner Eurasia was part of a global transformation in human relations with the biosphere, as states, empires, and corporations engaged in increasingly feverish competition to mobilize new lands and new resources.<sup>1</sup>

At a global scale, Europe and the Atlantic world became increasingly important drivers of change. Within Inner Eurasia, new global currents of change seeped in primarily through the Russian heartland, which was now the most powerful polity within Inner Eurasia, and the one most committed to competing on a global stage. Since the time of Peter the Great, Russia's elites had begun to acquire European educations, and to adopt European sartorial and architectural styles, European lifeways and attitudes, and even European languages. Russian control of the Baltic shores and Siberia, and increasing trade through Central Asia, energized commercial flows between the Russian Empire and the rest of the world.

An important sign of Russia's increasing integration into the world economy was the convergence of Russian and European price levels in the eighteenth century. Two centuries earlier, the massive price rises experienced in Europe, driven by cheap American silver and the windfall profits made on the world's first global markets, had little impact in Muscovy. But in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russian prices began to rise, too, as Russia became a major importer of manufactured goods and exporter of raw materials.<sup>2</sup> Exports rose as Russia acquired new forms of colonial wealth. Expansion into Siberia provided new sources of furs, but also, for the first time, internal sources of precious metals. Silver was first discovered in 1702 near Nerchinsk, where a silver smelter was built in 1704, using the labor of prisoners and exiles. Gold was discovered in the Urals in the 1740s. By the late eighteenth century, Russia

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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was producing large amounts of gold, and enough silver to mint almost all of its coinage.<sup>3</sup> It had also become a major iron producer.

But Russian governments, though keen to borrow anything of value from the increasingly dynamic world of Europe, were also selective in their borrowing. They borrowed to enhance the power and wealth of the Russian state, and that meant scrutinizing European innovations carefully for their potential impact on Russia's traditional mobilizational system, whether they were new methods of farming, or new political and economic ideas. Russia would remain a traditional society, and the political and industrial revolutions that began to transform western Europe at the end of the eighteenth century would make little headway in the Russian Empire until the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1820, the GDP per person of the lands that became the USSR was about 750 1990 US dollars (similar to that of eastern Europe at \$748), while that of western Europe already stood at about \$1,292.<sup>4</sup>

## *REUNIFYING INNER EURASIA*

While China consolidated its grip on much of eastern Inner Eurasia, the Russian Empire consolidated its grip on Siberia, extended its influence deep into the central Inner Eurasian steppes, and also expanded westwards into eastern Europe and southwards into the Pontic steppes and the Caucasus. The area controlled by the Russian Empire increased from about 15 million sq. kilometers in 1750 to 16.6 million sq. kilometers in 1796 and 18.2 sq. kilometers in 1858.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will focus on regions west of the Volga, and so will Chapter 10. We will return in Chapter 11 to the history of central and eastern Inner Eurasia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## EXPANSION TO THE WEST AND SOUTH IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By 1750, Russia was a European superpower. Its main military rival was no longer Poland or Sweden, but the rising power of Prussia. In the “Diplomatic Revolution” of 1756, Empress Elizabeth allied Russia with France and Austria against Britain and Prussia. Russian armies entered central Europe and defeated the armies of Frederick the Great in 1757, 1758, and 1759, occupied much of eastern Prussia in 1758, and took Berlin itself in 1760. These demonstrations of Russian military might were all the more striking given Russia's dynastic instability since the death of Peter the Great in 1725.

In 1762, the diplomatic and military situation was transformed by the death of Empress Elizabeth and the accession of her nephew, Peter III. Peter admired Frederick the Great and immediately made peace with Prussia. This meant that Russia gained little from the costly wars of the previous decade, though it had asserted both its right and its ability to play a major role in European affairs. Peter was soon forced to abdicate by Guards officers, and then murdered in prison, just six months after his accession. He was succeeded by his wife, the former German princess, Catherine.

In the late eighteenth century, under Catherine “the Great,” the Russian Empire conquered much of western Ukraine, advanced deep into eastern Europe as Poland was partitioned between Prussia, the Habsburg Empire, and the Russian Empire, consolidated its grip on the Pontic steppes, and began for the first time to build an empire in the Caucasus.

In 1764, Catherine abolished the Ukrainian Hetmanate, and in 1781 she brought Ukraine within the new Russian system of provinces. The empire absorbed Ukraine as it had so many other regions, by absorbing its elites, most of whom accepted their new suzerain with little protest. Ukraine’s Cossack elites found their position as a ruling class and their control of land and peasants was protected within the Russian Empire, new posts opened up within the Imperial administration, and under the 1785 Charter of the Nobility, they could formally become part of the Russian nobility.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1770s, the Russian Empire, the Austrian Empire, and Prussia began to carve up the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was already, by this time, effectively a Russian protectorate. On the face of it, Catherine seemed willing to support an independent, even a reformed Poland. But she was also determined to keep the Polish monarchy weak, so she opposed attempts to abolish the *liberum veto*. In 1764, she supported the election of a reforming monarch, her former lover Stanislaw August Poniatowski. Most of the Polish nobility opposed his attempts at modernizing reforms, and they united against him in the Confederation of Bar (1768–1772). Russian armies defeated Poniatowski’s opponents in 1772, and large numbers of Polish nobles ended up in Siberian exile. In August 1772, Russia annexed most of modern Belarus in the first partition of Poland.

Between 1773 and the second partition in 1793, Poniatowski introduced further reforms, including, in 1791, Europe’s first written constitution. In 1793, Catherine invaded once more, having been invited to do so by Polish nobles opposed to a constitution that threatened traditional gentry rights. Poniatowski was forced from the throne after a massive anti-Russian uprising led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko in 1794. The third partition followed in 1795, after Russian armies led by Alexander Suvorov crushed the Polish revolt in a brutal campaign, in which thousands of civilians were massacred in Warsaw.

After 1795, Poland ceased to exist as an independent state. Russia gained the rest of Belarus and Latvia, all of Lithuania, and much of western Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> The partitions gave Russia control of former Lithuanian and Polish lands as far as the Vistula, and the Russian Empire acquired a new population whose peasantry was largely Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian, while its elites were mostly Polish and Catholic. Russia also acquired for the first time a large Jewish population. By the seventeenth century most of the world’s Jews lived in eastern Europe, having been driven eastwards by persecution in western Europe. Muscovy had long excluded Jews, partly through fear of the impact of Judaism on Orthodoxy, a fear that can be traced back to the so-called “Judaizer” controversies of the late fifteenth century. But from 1667 onwards, Russian expansion brought huge numbers of Jews under Russian rule. The Polish partitions alone brought almost half a million Jews into the empire, creating the largest Jewish community anywhere in the world.<sup>8</sup>



In the late eighteenth century, the Russian Empire also completed the long process of conquering the Pontic steppes, by absorbing the Crimean khanate, the last successor state to the Golden Horde.

In 1696, Peter I had conquered Azov, giving Russia a brief toehold in the Black Sea region. Russia lost Azov in 1711 but reannexed it in 1739. By this time, Tatar raids into Muscovy were no longer the threat they had once been, as Crimean raiding parties were blocked by new fortification lines, and hemmed in by Russian control of the Volga river and left-bank Ukraine.<sup>9</sup> Like Poland, Crimea began to look like a dependency of the Russian Empire. Increasingly, its fate depended on decisions taken in Moscow rather than Bakhchesaray or Istanbul. No strong khans appeared in the eighteenth century, partly because the end of slave raiding had impoverished Crimea's rulers and its leading clans. In 1736, Russian armies invaded Crimea and sacked Bakhchesaray. However, provisioning and maintaining a Russian army so far south was still an expensive and complicated business, so Russia's armies withdrew without annexing Crimea. But the threat of annexation was by now real enough. Eventually, Khan Selamet Giray II (1740–1743), realizing that the balance of power in the Pontic steppes was changing fast, opened diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire.

War broke out between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in September 1768, when Russian armies fighting the Polish "Confederation of Bar" entered territory claimed by Crimea. Crimean armies resisted, and in October the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. Crimean armies played little role in the war that followed, partly because Russia had negotiated an alliance with the Yedisian Nogais, whose territory lay between the Dniester and Dnieper armies, dividing the Crimean Tatar forces from those of the Ottoman Empire. When Russian warships destroyed the Ottoman fleet off the western Anatolian port of Ceshme in 1770, Crimea was also isolated by sea. Some groups within Crimea began to advocate an alliance with Russia, particularly after Russia promised (as the Ottomans had three centuries earlier) to respect Crimean independence. Russia sent an army to Crimea in 1771. In 1772, a new khan negotiated a treaty with Russia formally granting Crimean independence, after which large numbers of Crimean nobles fled to Istanbul, in the hope of organizing an eventual reconquest. In 1776, Catherine installed a Crimean Poniatowski in Khan Shahin Giray. He tried to strengthen his own authority over the nobility and the major clans and to create a modernized army.<sup>10</sup>

The 1774 treaty of Kucuk Kainarca marks Russia's domination of the Pontic steppes. The Ottoman Empire gave its reluctant blessing to the existence of a formally independent Crimean state, now under Russian protection. It also conceded Russia control over the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Pontic steppe. For the first time in the region's history, a Russian polity ruled the Pontic steppe, a region in which Slavic armies had campaigned since the time of Kievan Rus'. Preoccupied with the Pugachev uprising and its aftermath in 1775, Catherine resisted pressure to annex Crimea until 1783. Then, after a revolt against Shahin Giray's reforms, Crimea and southern Ukraine were both incorporated into the Russian Empire. The conquest of Crimea gave Russia access to the Black Sea, and to the Caucasus and Persia. It also gave Russia a

second major outlet to the sea, turning Russia for the first time into a major naval power.

Russia's conquest of the Pontic steppes was as momentous as the Qing conquest of the Oirat. From 1764, most of the steppelands north of Crimea were included within a new province of Novorossiia, which would be ruled after 1783 by Catherine's former lover, Grigorii Potemkin. To settle the towns and villages abandoned after the massive exodus of Tatars to the Ottoman Empire, Potemkin encouraged immigration from Russia and Ukraine. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Slavic migrants made up a majority of Crimea's population, and Russian was the peninsula's language of government and commerce.<sup>11</sup>

Conquest of the Pontic steppes brought the Russian Empire to the mountainous southern borders of Inner Eurasia in the Caucasus, and sucked Russian armies into the region's complex and violent politics.

The Caucasus has not been central to this account of Inner Eurasia because, ecologically, it was a mountainous borderland, very different from most of Inner Eurasia. But the story of Russian expansion into the Caucasus tells us a lot about Inner Eurasia, because it shows why and how Russian expansion was eventually slowed and checked at the rim of Inner Eurasia's vast flatlands. In the mountains of the Caucasus, Russian armies and administrators faced novel challenges, and expansion would get tougher and slower, until eventually it ground to a halt. But Russia's prolonged, expensive, and bloody attempts to expand into the Caucasus also demonstrate the extent of the expansionist momentum built up by the Russian mobilizational machine over several centuries.<sup>12</sup>

For many centuries, the Ottoman and Persian empires had competed for control over the Caucasus. The Russian conquest of the Pontic steppes brought Russian armies, too, within reach of the Caucasus. But Russian interest in the region dated from the sixteenth century. In 1557, a Kabardin (Circassian) prince, Temriuk Aidar, sent envoys to Moscow seeking its protection. In October 1558 his sons, Bulgeruko and Sultanuko, entered the service of Ivan IV and were baptized. Their descendants would be known as the "Cherkasskis" (Circassians).<sup>13</sup> After the death of his first wife, Anastasia Romanova, Ivan married a daughter of Temriuk, Maria Temriukovna, and that marriage would give Moscow dynastic claims on Circassia, which included much of the central and western parts of the northern Caucasus.<sup>14</sup> In 1567, Ivan IV established a Russian fort on the northeastern frontier of the Caucasus at Tersk, where the Terek river empties into the Caspian Sea. It was manned only until 1571, though a new fort with the same name would be re-established in 1588 near the estuary of the Terek, and would survive until the middle of the eighteenth century.

In the early eighteenth century, Russia began to intervene more actively in the Caucasus. In 1722, as Persian power declined, Peter launched an unsuccessful invasion from Astrakhan, in alliance with several Caucasian powers. In the reign of Elizabeth I (1741–1762), Russia began building a line of fortifications along the Terek river, known as the Mozdok line. This was settled by Armenians and Cossacks as well as migrants from the mountains. However,

the forts provoked Circassian resistance as they infringed on traditional pasturelands in eastern Circassia. In 1771, during the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–1774, that resistance gave Catherine the excuse she needed to declare Russian suzerainty over Circassia/Kabarda, relying on the dynastic claims established by Ivan IV.

In 1774, after the treaty of Kucuk Kainarca, Russia became a major force in the Caucasus for the first time. Grigorii Potemkin, as governor of Novorossiia and Crimea, extended the Caucasus line of forts west and north to Azov, and planted new settlements around them. A new viceroyalty of the Caucasus was established. In 1783, King Erekle of Georgia formally accepted Russian protection, and in 1784, Russia built the fort of Vladikavkaz, in the center of the northern Caucasus. As Kappeler writes, the name of the new fort city “stood for a political programme.”<sup>15</sup> Russia now began building a “Georgian Military Highway” heading south from Vladikavkaz to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, through mountainous regions dominated by Circassians and Ossetians.

## EXPANSION IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The early nineteenth century was dominated by the Napoleonic wars. Though these began badly for the Russian Empire, they would be followed by a further pulse of expansion, as the Russian Empire became a global superpower.

Opposing French expansion in Europe, Russian and Austrian armies were defeated at Austerlitz in 1805 and again at Friedland in 1807. Now without any significant allies, Tsar Alexander I made peace with Napoleon. In July 1807, the two emperors met on a raft on the Neman river and signed the treaty of Tilsit. Alexander claimed later that he had never intended Tilsit as more than a breathing space. And indeed the treaty cost Russia dearly, as Napoleon forced it to join the “Continental System,” the French blockade of Britain, the country to which Russia sold 70 percent of its hemp and iron, 90 percent of its flax, and most of its wheat. Particularly worrying for Russia was Napoleon’s decision to create a Grand Duchy of Poland from Prussian and Austrian parts of Poland. Napoleon described the new Duchy as a “pistol” aimed at Russia.<sup>16</sup>

In December 1810 Alexander abandoned the Continental System and allowed trade with Britain on neutral ships. He also began a series of military reforms under a new Minister of War, Barclay de Tolly, which doubled the size of the army. In June 1812, a French-led army of 450,000 men with over 1,000 cannon crossed the Neman. In August, it inflicted several defeats on Russian forces near Smolensk. Barclay was replaced by a general with a more Russian-sounding name, Kutuzov. But Russian armies retreated even further after the bloody but indecisive battle of Borodino in September. Napoleon tried to force battle by pursuing Russian armies to Moscow. With Alexander’s backing, Kutuzov took the difficult decision to surrender Moscow, while keeping his armies intact, so he could protect the armaments factories of Tula and the rich agricultural lands to the south and east of Moscow.<sup>17</sup> Using tactics similar to those Russian armies had faced many times from pastoralist enemies (even the Russians talked of a *skifskaiia strategiia*, or “Scythian strategy”), the Russians

lured Napoleon's armies deep into Russia, without offering any clear targets. While France's campaign lost direction and momentum, Russia's armies mobilized more troops and more equipment and supplies with which to attack their increasingly demoralized enemy.<sup>18</sup>

Long experience of steppe warfare paid dividends. After Borodino, partisan armies, sometimes with nomadic auxiliaries, began to harry French forces. In the winter of 1812, French armies were forced to retreat, and in December 1812 only 40,000 French soldiers and allies returned across the Neman river, a tenth of the number that had invaded six months earlier. Part of the problem was that the French were unfamiliar with the challenge of fighting in Russia, so they did not organize enough supplies, which forced their soldiers to loot, which alienated the population and sapped morale and discipline.<sup>19</sup> Russian forces now pursued the remains of the French army across Europe and as far as Paris.

Russia dominated negotiations at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In that year, Tsar Alexander I created a new Kingdom of Poland, ruled by himself. It included only a seventh of the former commonwealth. Fifteen years later, after the unsuccessful Polish uprising of 1830, Russia ended even the semblance of constitutional rule. That Russia was a military superpower now seemed obvious. Its reputation was sustained by smaller military campaigns against Turkey in 1829, in Poland (in 1830–1831), and in Hungary (in 1849), as well as a prolonged and costly war of conquest in the Caucasus.

Russian expansion into the Caucasus continued during and after the Napoleonic wars. In 1801, Catherine's son Paul I formally annexed much of Georgia. Efforts to defend Christian Georgia now drew Russia deeper into the Caucasus. In 1812, a treaty with the Ottoman Empire granted Russia control of western Georgia, while an 1813 treaty with Persia conceded Russian control of much of the eastern Caucasus including much of modern Azerbaijan and the oil-rich region near Baku. By 1828, after Russia incorporated the khanates of Erevan and Nakhichevan, the Russian Empire had replaced Persia as the hegemon of most of eastern Transcaucasia.

Russian expansion into the Caucasus, though encouraged by hopes of increasing influence over the Ottoman Empire and increased trade with Asia, was largely unplanned. The crucial decisions were mostly taken in response to local events, including local requests for Russian support, and attacks on Russian troops.<sup>20</sup> Momentum and local initiative usually trumped planning.

Claiming suzerainty over the Caucasus was easy. Gaining real control proved extremely hard. It was a very different task from conquering the Pontic steppes, though fortified points would play a crucial role in both projects. One problem for Russian generals and administrators was that many Caucasian communities lacked formal leadership structures, so there were no established elites that could be negotiated with by Russian commanders or co-opted by the Russian government.<sup>21</sup>

General Ermolov, who served as proconsul of the Caucasus from 1816–1827, launched a series of murderous pacification campaigns that generated new forms of religious resistance and united previously divided groups. In the 1820s, resistance to Russian rule increased, as the Naqshbandiyya spread

through the Caucasus, bringing with them the idea of jihad and a new commitment to sharia law. In the late 1820s, many tribes of Daghestan and Chechnya united under a Naqshbandiyya Sufi leader called Imam Ghazi Muhammad who advocated jihad against the Russians. In 1834, two years after his death, one of his pupils, Shamil (1797–1871), became leader of the resistance movement. He would command it for a quarter of a century until his capture and surrender in 1859.

In the absence of a broad sense of political, tribal, or ethnic unity, Shamil's war of resistance took the form of a religious war. As Khodarkovsky writes, it was "as much about instilling true Islam and turning the population of the North Caucasus into genuine Muslims as it was about resistance to the Russian invasion."<sup>22</sup> Shamil himself was an Avar from Daghestan. He received a rounded Muslim education in the region's madrasas, and acquired his military skills under Ghazi Muhammad. In 1834, Shamil was chosen as the third Imam of an Islamic state whose center lay in Daghestan and Chechnya.<sup>23</sup> He called himself *amir al-muminin*, or "Commander of the Faithful," using the title of the early caliphs, and worked hard to replace local tribal law or *adat* with Islamic sharia law. After his capture by the Russians in 1859, he was exiled to Kaluga. At the end of his life he was allowed to perform the hajj for a second time, and died in Medina.

Michael Khodarkovsky, a connoisseur of the politics of the Russian frontiers, gives a vivid insight into the complexities and cross-cutting interests of these brutal wars in his biography of Semen Atarshchikov, a Russian army officer and translator of Chechen and Nogai origin, who served both sides at different times.<sup>24</sup> Atarshchikov grew up in Russian and Cossack townships, was educated in Russian schools, and baptized as a Christian. But he had also lived for a time with relatives in Daghestan, and eventually, like many others in this brutal war, he changed sides. (Russian prisoners reported that in the 1840s there were at least 500 Russian deserters living in the camp of Imam Shamil.) In one vivid scene, Khodarkovsky describes an unsuccessful raid led by Atarshchikov in April 1843 on the Russian frontier fort of Bekeshevskaia. The raid was repelled, after Cossack and Nogai troops from nearby settlements arrived to defend Bekeshevskaia. As so often, better coordination, good intelligence, tactical alliances with local tribes, and disciplined fire gave Russian garrison forces a significant military advantage over less disciplined and coordinated highland raiding parties.<sup>25</sup>

The nature of the Russian campaigns in the Caucasus changed after the appointment of the English-educated Mikhail Vorontsov as viceroy in 1844. Vorontsov insisted that military methods alone were insufficient. The Russian government also had to offer schools, roads, employment, and some protection for Islam. Nevertheless, the army remained the primary instrument of conquest. Having pacified the eastern Caucasus, by 1864 Russian armies also controlled most of the western Caucasus, where they would crush Circassian resistance and force some 300,000 Circassians to migrate to the Ottoman Empire.

By the 1860s, Russia had conquered the Caucasus, but at a huge cost in money and lives. The Russians probably lost 100,000 battle casualties and nine

times as many deaths from disease. As Khodarkovsky points out, if we assume that at least as many natives died as Russians during the war of conquest, that would mean that “two million people perished so that an estimated population of four million natives could be annexed to Russia.”<sup>26</sup> Despite these massive costs, Russian control of parts of the Caucasus such as Chechnya remains uncertain even today.

## *THE RUSSIAN HEARTLAND: A MOBILIZATIONAL PLATEAU*

How did successive Russian governments mobilize the resources needed to achieve such a dominant role within Inner Eurasia, eastern Europe, the Pontic steppes, and the Caucasus?

First, the mobilizational achievement owed much to demographic and economic growth. Second, though, successive Russian governments used their increasing human, material, and financial resources with great effectiveness. That, in turn, reflected the third crucial factor, the continued unity and cohesion of Russia’s ruling elites, the metaphorical shareholders in the Russian mobilizational system. However, in this period we can also begin to see how the very successes of the system would eventually sap elite unity. This is why it is appropriate to think of this period as a mobilizational plateau. The Russian mobilizational machine functioned with great efficiency and power, yet it showed no signs of generating further mobilizational power because it seemed to have enough power in reserve to cope with all its major challenges. Eventually, the system’s success would reduce the disciplinary pressure on Russia’s elites and undermine the elite unity that held it together.

## ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH

In contrast to the relatively stagnant economies of the steppelands and Central Asia, the Russian Empire experienced a long period of sustained population growth that drove and fueled territorial expansion. Demographic and territorial expansion provided the rising tide of people and resources that gave the Russian mobilizational project its buoyancy. Within the territory controlled by Muscovy at the end of the seventeenth century, the peasant population grew from *c.*9 million in 1678 to 20 million a century later, and *c.*32 million in 1857.<sup>27</sup> If we add new populations incorporated through expansion, the empire’s total population rose by more than five times in the same period, from *c.*11 million in 1678 to about 37 million in 1795, and 59 million in 1857.<sup>28</sup> No other polity in Inner Eurasia could boast of such sustained growth.

Russia was still a land of peasants, so population growth meant, above all, more peasants. Agriculture was the main occupation even of most town dwellers in the eighteenth century, and in the early nineteenth century peasants accounted for a third of those living in towns.<sup>29</sup> Why did peasant populations grow so fast? High fertility is typical of most peasant societies,

because labor is the one factor of production over which peasant families have some control.<sup>30</sup> In frontier societies, or regions with surplus land, such practices make even more sense, because with more hands you can cultivate more land. So peasant women spent most of their fertile years pregnant, or rearing children. High birth rates were vital to provide labor and to support the old, and also to compensate for very high rates of infant mortality.

Almost all peasants married. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, those who never married before the age of 60 accounted for just 1 percent of the population, a number that matches the number of the severely disabled.<sup>31</sup> Most marriages produced many babies, but many babies died young. The crude birth rate among the Orthodox population in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was about 50/1,000. Mortality rates in the eighteenth century ranged from 40 to 60/1,000 in urban areas, but were lower, at 30–40/1,000, in the villages.<sup>32</sup> These average differences between birth rates and death rates were enough to allow sustained growth of the peasant population.

Territorial expansion created new border regions with abundant free land, which increased the value of new hands both to peasant households and to their landlords. Serfowners encouraged population growth because peasants were capital. More peasants meant more serfs and more labor. Even in the core regions of Russia, where poor soils, short growing seasons, and unpredictable climates made intensive farming risky, spare land was still available until the late eighteenth century, so the best way of profiting from extra labor was to bring more land into cultivation, using traditional methods. Few peasants or landlords had the capital or the skills needed to intensify production by introducing more modern farming methods.<sup>33</sup> And, particularly in the core regions of Muscovy, most peasant agriculture continued to be organized collectively, by peasant “communes” that partitioned both the land and tax obligations between households according to their size. Particularly in the Muscovite heartlands of Russia, collective ownership of the land slowed the development of more entrepreneurial forms of farming.

In summary, the needs of the peasant household, of serfowners, and of the state coincided in encouraging population growth, expansion, and the plowing up of new land.

Differences in the availability of land, in soils, and in climates in different parts of the empire did encourage limited experimentation as peasants adapted to novel conditions. While peasants in the more densely settled central regions introduced three-field crop rotations or took up wage work or specialized in crafts of various kinds, in regions of recent migration, from Siberia to the Pontic steppes, less intensive farming methods persisted. Peasants often left large areas fallow for several years, or raised large numbers of livestock. In these regions, individual farming was generally more common than communal farming.<sup>34</sup> Specialization forced peasant households to engage more with markets and to trade both labor and produce. In the second half of the eighteenth century alone, the number of factories using hired labor rose four times, to about 2,000.<sup>35</sup>

## FISCAL AND MILITARY MOBILIZATION

How could the Russian mobilizational machine best profit from sustained growth in people, resources, and land?<sup>36</sup>

First of all, the government built up the size and effectiveness of its armies. The army, in turn, provided the military security and the territorial advances that allowed continued expansion. Not surprisingly, the army and navy, which were both drivers and beneficiaries of growth, regularly consumed 50 percent of government revenues.<sup>37</sup>

On its western frontiers, Russian armies faced rivals such as Prussia or, eventually, France, which enjoyed much larger revenues. Relatively speaking, this meant that the Tsarist state had to tax its populations harder to remain a Great Power.<sup>38</sup> As always in Inner Eurasia, mobilizational pressure had to compensate for limited resources. In 1756, to give just one illustration, the Russian army (including irregulars) was larger than that of France, though Russian government revenues were only a fifth as large as those of the French government.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century, the government's cash revenues steadily rose. The poll tax, introduced by Peter I from 1719, was the most important single revenue raiser in the eighteenth century. Levied on all males, its yield rose as populations increased. However, as the economy became more monetized, indirect taxes and taxes on market activities also yielded more revenue. Particularly important were taxes raised from products such as liquor and salt that were needed by every peasant household, but hard or impossible to produce within the household economy. Because they were used by most of the population, taxes on such commodities could yield huge revenues that rose, like the yield from the poll tax, as populations increased. By 1724, taxes on distilled liquor (vodka) accounted for about 11 percent of government revenues; in the nineteenth century, they yielded, on average, about 31 percent of revenues.<sup>40</sup> Salt had been an important item of internal trade for a long time, and the main source of the Stroganov family fortune. Peter the Great turned salt production and sale into a government monopoly, but the costs of managing the monopoly were huge, and in 1818 the government abandoned its salt monopoly.

In the eighteenth century, Russia began to create a modern banking system. Russia's first bank, the Loan Bank, was created in 1754 to provide loans to merchants and landlords. In 1769 paper money was introduced under the management of a new "Assignat" bank. The first savings banks open to all classes were not created until 1841. Russian governments also gained access to international credit, though such transactions were largely handled by foreign "court bankers." In 1769, the Russian government took out its first major international loan, which was handled by an Amsterdam bank, Raymond and Theodore De Smeth. Later in the century it took out more loans, mainly to finance the fleet, and military operations in Poland and Turkey.<sup>41</sup> The late development of overseas borrowing suggests a low level of monetization, but it also highlights the remarkable fiscal self-sufficiency of Russian governments.



Until the late nineteenth century, limited dependence on credit spared the Russian government from the financial embarrassments that had undermined the French monarchy in the late eighteenth century.

The most direct form of mobilization was recruitment. Since 1705, peasant recruits were expected to serve for life. In 1793, the period of service was reduced to 25 years. Between 1720 and 1867, Russian governments conscripted some 7 million men, almost all from the peasantry.<sup>42</sup> By 1825, the standing army included 750,000 men, making it by far the largest army in Europe. During Alexander's reign, about 4 percent of the male population served in the army. No other European country, except perhaps Prussia, had such a high military participation rate.<sup>43</sup> Serfdom and population growth allowed Russia to field large armies despite high casualties in battle and even higher casualties from disease.<sup>44</sup> Russian armies increased in size despite massive casualties during the Northern Wars of Peter I and the Napoleonic campaigns.<sup>45</sup>

Rough estimates of the fiscal burden on peasant households suggest that from 1700 to 1850, most households surrendered to the state about half of what they produced. This represented an exceptionally high level of mobilizational pressure, as it seems likely that the total burden was less before 1700 and after 1850. However, the fiscal burden was almost certainly lower away from the central provinces. In frontier regions, noble estates were less common and it was easier to avoid the attentions of tax collectors.<sup>46</sup>

Even these calculations do not convey the full burden the army placed on the peasantry. For example, the government kept trying to make the army pay for some of its own costs. Such experiments began with the granting of land to the *strel'tsy* in the sixteenth century so they could grow their own food. (Chinese governments had made similar experiments with soldier/farmers since the Han era, particularly in Xinjiang and Mongolia.) In the nineteenth century, the government of Alexander I founded military colonies, settlements of soldiers that were expected to grow their own crops. These experiments may have been modeled in part on the traditions of Cossack communities in frontier regions from Ukraine to eastern Siberia, or on the practice of settling soldiers on land along Muscovy's frontier lines. In the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855), as many as a third of Russia's soldiers were military colonists.<sup>47</sup>

The government had many other ways of getting the army to pay for itself. Army units were supplied with leather and cloth so they could make their own boots and uniforms. Military *artels* or work cooperatives were encouraged to earn wages working on estates or engaging in trades.<sup>48</sup> Quartering troops on peasant or town households for 8 months of the year was another way of passing the costs of the army on to the "tax-paying" population.

Recruitment for life meant that Russian soldiers were socialized into the army more thoroughly than the soldiers of rival armies, many of whom were mercenaries. Desertion had been a serious problem in Peter's time. But after his reign it became less common, as lifelong recruitment cut soldiers off from civilian society. Recruits lost all ties with their native villages and entered an entirely new society, the *artel*, a unit of 8 to 10 men who lived and fought together. The *artel* handled any money or wealth the individual soldier might

gain through looting or wages, so that soldiers built up savings, which they would lose if they deserted. The *artel* also inherited a soldier's wealth when he died. Because of the religious, ethnic, and linguistic uniformity of the Russian heartlands, and the tendency to exclude non-Russian ethnic groups from the army or form them into separate units, the army was also remarkably homogeneous in culture, religion, language, and ethnicity. These powerful forms of socialization allowed Russian commanders to march their forces by night or near swamps, practices that other armies avoided because they invited mass desertion.<sup>49</sup> The low desertion rates of Russia's armies astonished European observers. A German officer serving in the 1740s wrote: "as to desertion, it is a thing unknown in the Russian armies."<sup>50</sup> These factors help explain why an army recruited from serfs proved such a reliable defender of serfdom.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Russian army had largely caught up with European methods of organization and the technologies of the gunpowder revolution. But its main strengths were still mobilizational rather than technological.<sup>51</sup> Most military innovations were borrowed from abroad, though they were adapted, often with great skill, to Russian conditions. For example, General Munnich, a German-born Russian general who served under Empress Anna, tackled the problem of supplying troops with water in arid zones by transporting it in vast wooden casks pulled by oxen. When the water was used, the oxen were slaughtered for food and the casks burnt as firewood.<sup>52</sup>

Though the mobilizational pressure exerted on the population was intense, it was relieved by territorial expansion. For example, grain produced in the Pontic steppes helped feed the Russian army in 1812. Imperial expansion explains why it was not necessary to increase the tax burden even further as the army grew. While the size and cost of the regular army increased by three times from the 1760s to the 1790s, the proportion of government revenue spent on the army and navy fell from 63 percent to 35 percent between 1762 and 1796.<sup>53</sup>

The Russian victories after 1812 were so spectacular that Russian governments began to display a certain complacency. Under Nicholas I, the army expanded, from c.729,000 soldiers in 1826 to more than 930,000 regulars and 240,000 irregulars by the time of the Crimean (or "Eastern") War in 1853–1856. In 1834, Nicholas allowed those who had served "flawlessly" for 15 years to retire from the army, though they remained available as reservists. (The reform did create a pool of reserves, but many retired soldiers found they were unwelcome in their former villages and became vagabonds or beggars or criminals.) Nicholas also established Russia's first General Staff College.<sup>54</sup> But the army also suffered from weaknesses that were tolerable in wars against weaker opponents, but would prove dangerous when it faced the most advanced European armies during the Crimean War. Despite the size of its armies, the Russian government found it increasingly difficult to get troops where they needed to be. Part of the problem was the size of the country and the limits of its transportation system, and part was the high rate of casualties, caused largely by disease and poor medicine. Between 1825 and 1850, some 30,000 Russian soldiers died on the battlefield, but 900,000 died of disease.<sup>55</sup>

## SHAREHOLDERS: THE RUSSIAN ELITE

The late eighteenth century was a golden age for the Russian nobility, the primary shareholders in the Russian mobilizational system. Serfowners benefited from population growth, geographical expansion, and rising prices. The number of serfs increased, as did the amount of land available to the gentry, while rising prices increased the profits from selling grain and other goods produced with serf labor.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, the successes of the Russian Empire reduced the need for the sort of extreme disciplinary pressure experienced by the Muscovite and Petrine nobility.

Though Peter's reforms had opened new pathways for the talented, they had widened the cultural gap between the system's main beneficiaries, the noble estate or *soslovie* together with its many hangers-on, and the "tax-paying" people, the town dwellers and peasants who supplied most of the empire's recruits and resources. By the late eighteenth century many nobles spoke French in preference to Russian, and their houses, clothing, cuisine, and lifestyles were a civilization away from the world of the serfs who supported them. True, many lesser nobles still lived lives not so different from those of their serfs, but even they usually lived in a different mental world, shaped more by literature and philosophy than by the imperatives of agriculture and village religion. They also lived in a different legal realm. Like Mongolia's *taiji* (see Chapter 11), Russian nobles, however poor, were not subject to taxation.

Some worried that Westernization would expose the nobility to corrosive western European ideas about the independence, the dignity, and the rights of nobles. The literature and philosophy of the Enlightenment introduced ideas that sat uneasily with Muscovy's political culture. Several eighteenth-century monarchs lent legitimacy to that discourse as they tried to compete culturally as well as militarily with Europe. In 1724, Peter the Great had founded Russia's first scholarly society, the Academy of Sciences, and staffed it mainly with European (mostly German) scholars. In 1755, Tsarina Elizabeth created Russia's first university, the University of Moscow. One of its founders, the scientist, poet, and polymath Mikhail Lomonosov, after a period working in German universities, would become the first modern Russian intellectual of non-noble origin. He was also the first ethnically Russian member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.<sup>57</sup>

Tensions between Russia's autocratic political culture and European cultural influences were particularly evident in the reign of Catherine the Great, herself of German origin. In 1767, she convened a Law Code Commission. On the face of it, this seemed to reintroduce some form of consultation between monarch and nobility, and the *Nakaz* or "Instruction" that she composed for the commission talked much of the rule of law. Yet in practice her notion of law was as autocratic as that of Peter I. She saw the law mainly as a lever with which to mobilize resources, and her Commission, like the *Zemskii Sobors* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was really a way of organizing and unifying the nobility behind a mobilizational project from which they all benefited.<sup>58</sup> Catherine's grandson Alexander I, whose Swiss tutor LaHarpe had briefly been a member of the Parisian Jacobin society, took constitutional ideas seriously for

a brief period after coming to power. But that talk evaporated as he engaged with the military threat posed by Napoleon.<sup>59</sup>

The extreme pressure that Peter I had placed on the nobility was relaxed in the eighteenth century. During his six-month reign, Peter III abolished the formal requirement that all nobles serve the state for life. Under Catherine the Great's "Noble Charter" of 1785, nobles were formally granted property rights and allowed not to serve if they chose. Her provincial reforms created new provincial institutions dominated by the nobility. On the face of it, these changes seemed to be creating a more independent and more European noble class.

Nevertheless, Russia's elite traditions of unity, cohesion, and service survived. Most nobles continued to serve in some capacity despite a reduction in their formal obligations, and service retained great prestige. For poorer nobles government service was also an important source of income. Almost 80 percent of the officers fighting at Borodino claimed not to own estates.<sup>60</sup> Poorer nobles could not afford the luxury of dissidence. The writer Karamzin captured their ethos when he wrote in 1811:

Autocracy is the Palladium of Russia. Its integrity is vital for Russia's happiness. This does not mean that the Tsar, the only source of power, should humiliate the nobility, which is as ancient as Russia itself, and has been in fact no less than a brotherhood of the leading servants of the grand princes and tsars.<sup>61</sup>

Wealthier nobles had very good reasons for supporting an autocratic system from which they did so well. And the nobility's relative homogeneity also limited dissidence. Ethnically, the nobility was mainly Russian, despite the fact that its leaders were increasingly French-speaking and Europeanized. (The first words of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are in French.) True, many nobles were descended from non-Russian ancestors, from Tatar or Polish or Ukrainian or Baltic families that were incorporated within the Russian nobility as the empire expanded. But, as we have seen, the Russian mobilizational system, like that of the Mongols, was very good at securing the loyalty of former rivals and enemies, and most nobles of non-Russian origin, like the Cherkasskis, were deeply Russified. To those with a toehold in Inner Eurasia's dominant mobilizational system, disloyalty had little attraction. By and large, the ethos of membership in a ruling elite trumped any sense of ethnic or national differences within the nobility, as it would two centuries later within the Soviet *nomenklatura*.

Yet over time, and in many subtle ways, Westernization did begin to change the ethos of the Russian elite, creating splits that would widen in the late nineteenth century. The Europeanization of the high aristocracy and of a growing class of well-educated non-nobles, the intelligentsia, and the growing importance of educated experts in the army, the civil service, and the professions encouraged a more critical attitude to Russia's autocratic traditions. Traveling to the West with the armies that defeated Napoleon was a transformative experience for many educated Russians, because it showed them both the power and the limitations of the Russian Empire. A future participant in the

1825 Decembrist revolt, which attempted to overthrow Nicholas I, wrote in his memoirs:

From France we returned to Russia by sea. The first division of the Guard landed at Oranienbaum [a royal palace near St. Petersburg] and listened to the *Te Deum* performed by the Archpriest Derzhavin. During the prayer, the police were mercilessly beating the people who attempted to draw near to the line-up of troops. This made upon us the first unfavourable impression when we returned to our homeland. ... Finally the Emperor appeared, accompanied by the Guard, on a fine sorrel horse, with an unsheathed sword, which he was ready to lower before the Empress. We looked with delight at him. But at that very moment almost under his horse, a peasant crossed the street. The Emperor spurred his horse and rushed with the unsheathed sword toward the running peasant. The police attacked him with their clubs. We did not believe our own eyes and turned away, ashamed for our beloved Tsar.<sup>62</sup>

The Decembrist revolt, just after the death of Alexander I in 1825, involved about 500 well-educated army officers of progressive views, including 16 colonels and two major generals.<sup>63</sup> Most of the Decembrists favored a constitutional government of some kind, though some, such as Paul Pestel, argued for a strong, highly centralized government. In its methods, though, the Decembrist revolt was closer to the eighteenth-century coups that had replaced one autocratic monarch with another than to the French Revolution. Catherine herself had come to power as the result of a Guards revolt, and the tactic of launching surgical palace coups against incompetent rulers was perhaps a useful corrective in an autocratic system. (It explains Madame de Staël's remark that the Russian "constitution" was "a despotism mitigated by strangulation.")<sup>64</sup>

During the reign of Nicholas I, the government began for the first time to encourage modern forms of Russian nationalism, which always threatened to conflict with the imperial realities of the empire. The Minister of Education, Sergey Uvarov (1786–1855), supported an ideology of "official nationalism" whose slogan was "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality." Official conservatism probably reflected the views of most nobles. Nevertheless, during Nicholas's reign, European, and particularly German, influences began to encourage more critical views within some sections of the nobility and the intelligentsia.

It is customary to divide these tendencies into two main dissident ideologies, those of the Westernizers and the Slavophiles, advocates, respectively, of Westernization and a distinctively Russian path to the future. Rivals debated these ideas in the so-called "thick journals" that circulated widely among the educated elite in the 1840s and 1850s. Their discussions were described in Alexander Herzen's sparkling memoirs, *My Past and Thoughts*. The debates were prompted by a devastating critique of Russian cultural and political backwardness written by Petr Chaadaev. Herzen himself began as a Westernizer. Eventually, though, he would leave for Europe, where he came under the influence of Western revolutionary and socialist thought and founded an illegal journal, *The Bell*. Influenced by Slavophile ideas, though much more radical in its

tone, this argued for a distinctive form of Russian socialism based on the collectivism of the traditional Russian peasant commune. The Slavophiles, though equally influenced by German thought, were drawn to organic thinkers such as Herder. Though critical of autocracy, Slavophiles such as Alexei Khomiakov and Konstantin Aksakov also criticized the individualism and rationalism of the West. In a foretaste of forms of cultural nationalism that would emerge in many other parts of the world, they argued for a distinctive “Slavophile” path to the future that would resist Western approaches to governance, following instead the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and Russia’s communal rural traditions.<sup>65</sup>

Such thinkers remained as yet just a small, though influential, dissident minority within a still conservative ruling elite. Most educated Russians still accepted the ideal of elite unity and discipline under an autocratic Tsar. And no wonder. Russia’s autocratic traditions had yielded rich dividends to its main beneficiaries and shareholders.

## WARNING SHOTS: THE CRIMEAN AND OPIUM WARS

In 1800, both the Russian and Qing empires had reason to feel complacent about the future. That mood was captured well in the famous reply of the Qianlong emperor in 1793 to the requests of a British trade delegation led by Lord Macartney. To King George, the Chinese emperor wrote:

You, O King, from afar have yearned after the blessings of our civilization, and in your eagerness to come into touch with our converting influence have sent an Embassy across the sea bearing a memorial. I have already taken note of your respectful spirit of submission, have treated your mission with extreme favor and loaded it with gifts ...

While acknowledging Britain’s humble petitions, the Qianlong emperor announced that China had no need of British goods. Like all other foreign traders, the British would have to continue trading through the single port of Canton. Russian governments knew Europe much better and were more aware of what it had to offer and how dangerous it could be. Yet the government of Nicholas I shared the confidence of Qianlong in its own power, durability, and invulnerability. Victory in 1812 had generated a certain smugness within Russia’s elites, a conviction that Russia had no need to compromise with European ideologies such as liberalism or nationalism. Russian armies had crushed revolts in Poland in 1830, defeated Ottoman armies in 1829, crushed a revolt in Hungary in 1849, and completed a long and difficult conquest of the Caucasus.

But though it was hard to see at the time, the very rules of mobilization began to change in the nineteenth century. By 1860, both the Qing and Russian empires had suffered catastrophic defeats at the hands of European armies and navies. These exposed serious weaknesses in the mobilizational machines they had constructed over many centuries. For China, defeat came with the Opium War of 1839–1842, when Britain used the *Nemesis*, the first iron gunboat ever built, to destroy Chinese war junks and secure control of the junction between

the Yangzi river and the Grand Canal, the commercial lifeblood of the empire. In 1842, at the treaty of Nanking, China conceded territory to Britain in Hong Kong, and agreed to pay war reparations. A second Opium War, in 1858–1860, would force China to legalize the opium trade.

Russia's moment of truth came during the Crimean or "Eastern" War, in 1853–1856.<sup>66</sup> European anxiety over Russian ambitions in the Balkans, and over-ambitious Russian diplomacy turned a minor conflict over the right to protect Christians in Palestine into a major war. Fantasies of controlling Constantinople, the religious homeland of Orthodox Christianity, had circulated in elite circles and within the Orthodox Church for centuries. They had even been taken up by Catherine the Great as Russia advanced south and into the Caucasus. She named her second son Constantine and taught him Greek. The decline of Ottoman power, reflected in a series of military defeats at Russian hands since the late eighteenth century, encouraged all European powers to jostle for influence in the region. Finally, Nicholas I supported an official nationalism that encouraged hopes of growing Russian influence in the eastern Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire.

In the early 1850s, the government of Nicholas I overplayed its hand by demanding that the Ottoman government give it the right to protect Orthodox Christians on Ottoman territory, including the Holy Land and Jerusalem. The Ottoman Empire rejected these demands, with French, British, and Austrian backing. The rising north Italian power of Sardinia joined them. The Russian army invaded the Ottoman Balkan principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and the Russian navy destroyed the Turkish Black Sea fleet at Sinope. Fearing a Turkish collapse, France and Britain declared war, and in September 1854, allied forces invaded the Crimea. Russian forces failed to defend their main naval base of Sevastopol, which fell after an 11-month siege.

At the peace conference in Paris in 1856, the new Tsar, Alexander II, was forced to surrender Bessarabia, and the Black Sea was demilitarized. The war itself would be the bloodiest of the nineteenth century for Russia, apart from the campaign of 1812. Russia lost 450,000 soldiers and sailors.<sup>67</sup> The military system created by Peter I had failed. Many Russian officials and generals immediately understood the significance of the fact that the victorious coalition included highly industrialized societies, societies that could move armies more efficiently by rail and steamship, that could supply them with more powerful and accurate cannon and firearms, and could communicate using the telegraph. As Fuller puts it, "The complacency engendered by 1812, which blinded much of the Russian elite to the military implications of the Industrial Revolution, would be shattered forever on the Crimean peninsula."<sup>68</sup>

The Opium Wars and the Crimean War were the first signs that the achievements of the Russian and Chinese mobilizational systems over many centuries might no longer be adequate. The rules of power and mobilization under the energy regime of the agrarian era were beginning to change with the arrival of a new energy regime based on fossil fuels. The second half of this book will show how rulers in Inner Eurasia reacted to the dizzying mobilizational challenges of a new era that seemed to supply virtually free energy in apparently limitless amounts, to both enemies and friends.

## NOTES

- 1 Richards, *Unending Frontier*, for a global perspective; for a recent overview of Russian colonization since the sixteenth century, Sunderland et al., *Russia's People of Empire*, 22–35; and Etkind, *Internal Colonization*.
- 2 Mironov, “Consequences of the Price Revolution”; and Mironov, “Wages and Prices.”
- 3 Mironov, “Consequences of the Price Revolution,” 460; on the Nerchinsk silver smelter, Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 68.
- 4 Allen, *Farm to Factory*, figures based on Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 23–24.
- 5 The last two figures are from Mironov, with Eklof, *Social History*, 2.
- 6 Snyder, “Ukrainians and Poles,” 170.
- 7 The following is based on Taagepera, “Overview of the Growth of the Russian Empire,” 2.
- 8 Nathans, “The Jews,” 186.
- 9 Fisher, *Crimean Tatars*, 49–50.
- 10 Fisher, *Crimean Tatars*, 62–64.
- 11 Cordova, *Crimea and the Black Sea*, 142–144.
- 12 See Kappeler, *Russian Empire*; King, *Ghost of Freedom*; Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*; Atkin, “Russian Expansion in the Caucasus.”
- 13 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 8–9.
- 14 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 9.
- 15 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 181; Vladikavkaz means “ruler of the Caucasus.”
- 16 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 184.
- 17 Before the war, Alexander I had warned the French ambassador, Caulaincourt, that “if the fighting went against me I should retire to Kamchatka rather than cede provinces and sign ... treaties that were really only truces”; Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 198.
- 18 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 201: “The recruitment system created by Peter the Great, which had delivered a margin of victory to him in his contest with the Swedes, proved just as important in Alexander I’s triumph over Napoleon.”
- 19 But, as Fuller shows, there was *not* a national uprising; peasants played a very small role in the campaign, there was plenty of desertion from the army, soldiers often looted Russian villages, and, all in all, there is little hard evidence of popular patriotism; *Strategy and Power*, 207–218.
- 20 Atkin, “Russian Expansion in the Caucasus,” 185.
- 21 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 179ff.
- 22 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 12.
- 23 Gould, “Imam Shamil,” 118–119.
- 24 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*. Some of these complexities are captured in Tolstoy’s novella, *Hadji Murat*.
- 25 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 157.
- 26 Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 12.
- 27 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 374.
- 28 Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii*, 56.
- 29 Mironov, *Social History*, 139.
- 30 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 374; and see Mironov, *Social History*, Ch. 2, which includes a table (2.1) giving basic rates of fertility, nuptiality, and mortality.
- 31 Mironov, *Social History*, 73.



- 32 Mironov, *Social History*, 80, 93–94.
- 33 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 374.
- 34 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 387.
- 35 Ananich, “Russian Economy and Banking System,” 397.
- 36 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, partic. 98–105, on the very difficult fiscal balance, and the dangers of both over-taxation and under-taxation.
- 37 Waldron, “State Finances,” 470.
- 38 Waldron, “State Finances,” 486.
- 39 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 536.
- 40 Waldron, “State Finances,” 474.
- 41 Ananich, “Russian Economy and Banking System,” 396–401.
- 42 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 532; Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 372.
- 43 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 531, 537.
- 44 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 536.
- 45 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 537.
- 46 Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 372.
- 47 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 242–243.
- 48 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 537–538.
- 49 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 532–534; and see the fine discussion of the remarkable discipline and bravery of Russian soldiers in Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 167–174; see also Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 178–179.
- 50 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 167.
- 51 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 173.
- 52 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 160.
- 53 Davies, “Development of Russian Military Power,” 176–177.
- 54 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 239–241.
- 55 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 254.
- 56 Mironov, “Consequences of the Price Revolution,” 467ff.
- 57 Gordin, “Mikhail Lomonosov,” 73.
- 58 Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, 215.
- 59 Christian, “Reform of the Russian Senate.”
- 60 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 534; Lieven, “The Elites,” 231.
- 61 Cited from Orlov et al., *Khrestomatiya po Istorii Rossii*, 244.
- 62 Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution*, 223, 238.
- 63 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 223, 238.
- 64 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 118.
- 65 Von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, describes these debates as examples of a world-wide phenomenon found in many modernizing countries whose intellectuals both took the West as a model and sought a distinctive national path towards modernity.
- 66 The most recent history of that war is Figes, *Crimea*.
- 67 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 540.
- 68 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 218.

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## PART II

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*Inner Eurasia in the Era of Fossil Fuels:  
1850–2000*



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## [10] *1850–1914: THE HEARTLAND: CONTINUED EXPANSION AND THE SHOCK OF INDUSTRIALIZATION*

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### *A NEW ENERGY REGIME: THE FOSSIL FUELS REVOLUTION*

In the nineteenth century, the old rules of mobilization were transformed by the energy bonanza of fossil fuels. Like a gold strike, fossil fuels created entirely new forms of wealth and power, made millionaires and paupers, and generated a feverish global rush for energy, resources, and new technologies. These changes would affect the Inner Eurasian heartland first, because that was the region of Inner Eurasia most sensitive to global competition. But over the next century, the fossil fuels revolution and its associated technologies would transform the whole world, including all of Inner Eurasia.

Since the beginnings of agriculture, some 10,000 years ago, most human societies had been powered by what E. A. Wrigley called the “organic energy regime.” They mobilized energy from recent photosynthesis: from human and animal labor (fed and fueled by the annual harvest), from wood, and in smaller amounts from wind and water power. Ultimately, this energy came from sunlight, captured by plants through photosynthesis, and diverted and mobilized for human use by agriculturalists. Eat wheat, and you are ingesting sunlight trapped within the last 12 months. Burn wood and you are releasing sunlight trapped during the lifetime of a tree. As the classical economists, such as Smith and Ricardo, understood, this meant that the energy flows mobilized by humans were limited by the annual harvest from fields and woodlands, in other words, by the area of land under crops and trees. Eventually, they argued, even the most efficient economies would hit an energy wall. Resource flows would slow, productivity would fall, businesses would fail, wages would crash, and societies would face the sort of demographic and resource crisis that all other

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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organisms face when they have filled their ecological niche. This would be the end of growth.

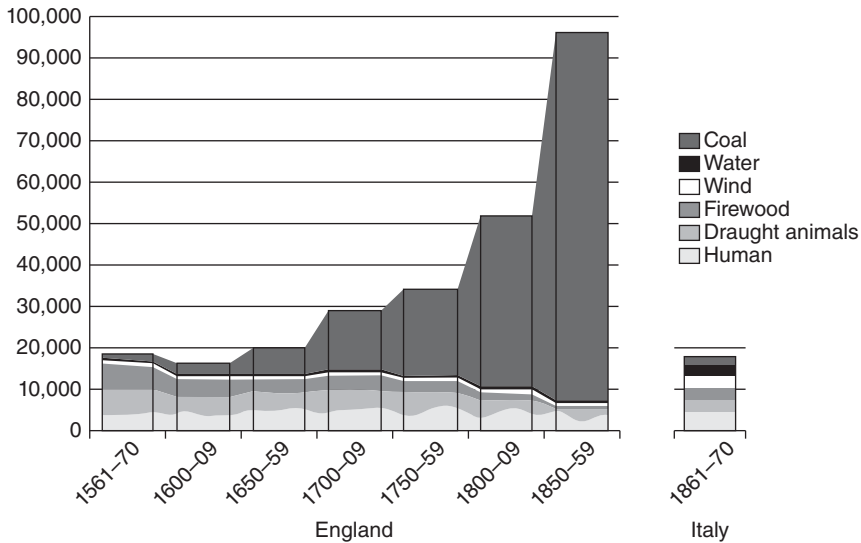
In a country fully peopled – wrote Adam Smith – in proportion to either what its territory could maintain or its stock employ, the competition for employment would necessarily be so great as to reduce the wages of labour to what was barely sufficient to keep up the number of labourers, and, the country already being fully peopled, the number could never be augmented.<sup>1</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, signs were multiplying that growth was indeed slowing in the world's most advanced economies, such as the Netherlands. By Adam Smith's time, as A. W. Crosby puts it, "Humanity had hit a ceiling in its utilization of sun energy."<sup>2</sup>

But growth did not end, because humans learnt how to tap into larger, and much more ancient supplies of photosynthetic energy, stored in fossil fuels. The breakthrough came in the eighteenth century, with technologies that made it possible to exploit the huge stores of fossilized photosynthetic energy buried and concentrated over several hundred million years in coal, oil, and natural gas. Many societies had burnt fossil fuels for heat. The revolutionary trick was to generate mechanical energy from them at reasonable prices. The first efficient coal-fired steam engines led human societies into an entirely new energy regime. Overnight, machines powered by fossil fuels gave access to a virtual labor force many times larger than that provided by humans and animals. Cheap energy, in its turn, stimulated the burst of innovations that would transform societies throughout the world in the nineteenth century.

The crucial technical breakthrough came in England, a once remote island off the north-west of the Eurasian landmass, with ambitious governments, a dynamic economy, trade links that spanned the globe, an increasing fascination with science and engineering, and large amounts of accessible coal. Here, from the sixteenth century, coal was beginning to replace wood as a primary source of heat in manufacturing and households. Its use encouraged investment in better ways of mining, moving, and using coal. It encouraged canal building and the introduction of the first, crude, steam engines to drain coal mines. In the late eighteenth century, these same pressures yielded the James Watt steam engine, the first machine that could turn the heat from fossil fuels into mechanical energy, cheaply and efficiently. By 1850 England had successfully transcended the energy limits of the agrarian era. The amount of energy mobilized by each person in England and Wales had increased by almost five times, from the Neolithic maximum of about 20,000 Megajoules per person to almost 100,000 Megajoules (Figure 10.1). In effect, each person had acquired four new energy slaves. In 1776, James Watt's backer, Matthew Boulton, told Dr. Johnson's biographer, Boswell: "I sell here, sire, what all the world desires to have – POWER."<sup>3</sup>

Once the technologies had been developed to extract cheap mechanical energy from fossil fuels, they multiplied the power and divided the cost of production and transportation. Wrigley gives a striking illustration of how fossil fuels could magnify the productivity of human labor.<sup>4</sup> A coal miner using about



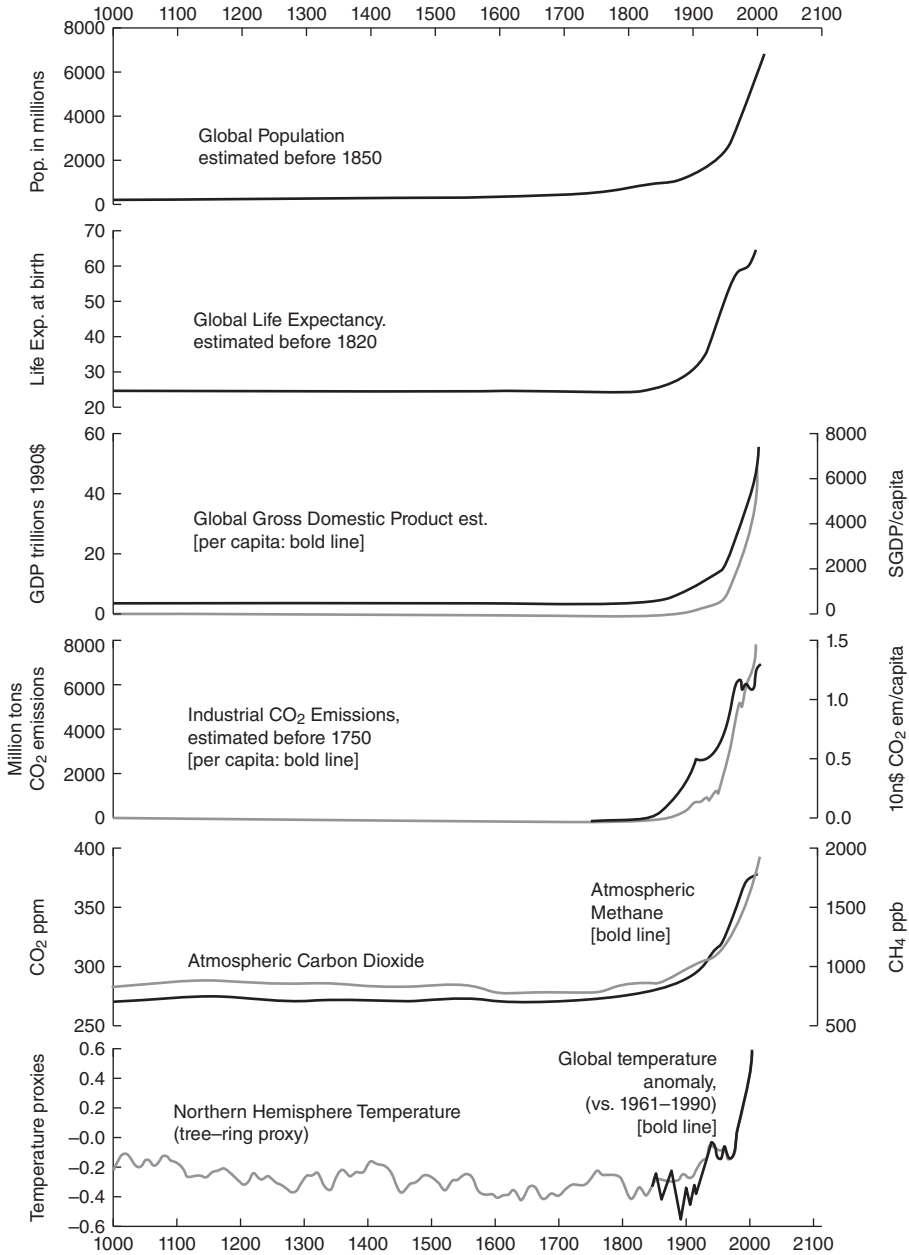
**Figure 10.1** Increasing energy consumption in early modern England and Wales. Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

one horsepower/hour of his own energy could produce enough coal to generate 27 times that much energy if it was burnt in a steam engine operating at 1 per cent efficiency. Even on these conservative estimates, it was as if each miner had been joined by 26 virtual labor slaves.<sup>5</sup> Or we can think of the energy from fossil fuels in terms of woodland equivalents. In 1750, the amount of energy supplied in England and Wales by coal would have required about 4.3 million acres of woodlands; by 1800 it would have required *c.*11.2 million acres; and by 1850 about 48.1 million acres. These areas are the equivalents, respectively, of 13 per cent, 25 per cent, and 150 per cent of the total area of England and Wales.<sup>6</sup>

Steam engines stimulated economic and technological change in many ways. They gave access to more cheap coal, as most of the world's coal fields lie so deep that they required steam engines to drain them. Fossil fuels stimulated innovation by posing new technological and commercial challenges, such as how to transport coal cheaply, or how to use steam engines to manufacture textiles. Increasing supplies of cheap energy drove other resource booms by lowering the costs of producing, transporting, and manufacturing metals, timber, cotton, and many other raw materials. Cheap energy also stimulated the search for new industries, such as the chemicals industry, many of whose early products were based on by-products of coal use. In 1970 almost 200 different chemical products were based on coal.<sup>7</sup> By the twentieth century, fossil fuels were being used to produce fertilizers that made it possible to feed a world of several billion people. Humans had learnt, in effect, how to eat oil.

The sharp upturns at the end of each section of Figure 10.2 illustrate the scale of the demographic, economic, and climatic changes that have transformed the world since the beginning of the fossil fuels revolution.<sup>8</sup> But the





**Figure 10.2** Hockey sticks: accelerating growth rates for population, life expectancy, GDP, and impacts on the climate system and biosphere. Brooke, *Climate Change*, Figure IV.3. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

graph also illustrates the costs of the fossil fuels revolution, which pumped back into the atmosphere and oceans vast stores of carbon dioxide that had been buried in fossil fuels over 300 million years. Today, increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse” gases are beginning to transform global climates and acidify the world’s oceans.

Since at least the nineteenth century, historians have debated the causes of these momentous changes that have created today’s world. This is not the place to review those debates in detail, but in a history of Inner Eurasia, it is helpful to distinguish between two broad types of explanation for modern forms of growth, between two possible drivers of growth.

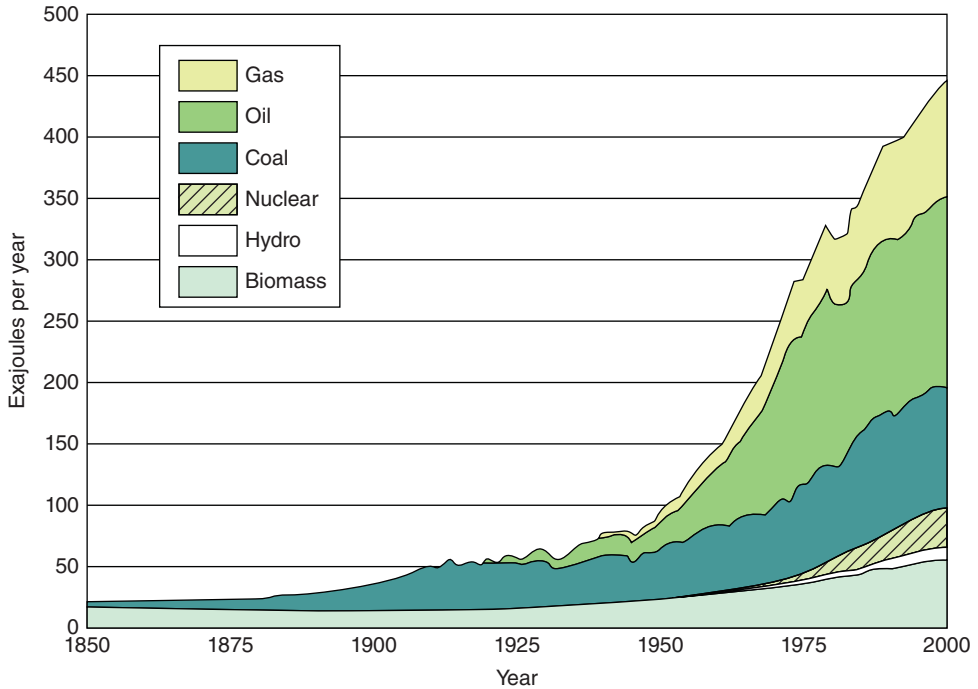
Most historians have explained the Industrial Revolution as a product of increased efficiency and innovation, driven by entrepreneurial competition and expanding markets. This is the “market driver of growth,” and it is driven primarily by the commercial strategies of mobilization that Marx called “capitalism.” Unlike traditional strategies of direct mobilization, which focused on the mobilization of resources rather than their efficient use, commercial mobilization drove growth by generating managerial and technological innovations that encouraged more efficient use of what was mobilized. Perhaps, as Marx argued, modernity is a product of the rapid spread of commercial methods since the sixteenth century. In the work of sociologists, the market driver of growth has often been linked to institutional “modernization,” to changes that created the preconditions for more efficient markets: clearer and more predictable legal structures and more rational and efficient forms of administration.

There can be no doubt that modern forms of capitalism stimulated innovation on scales never seen before in human history, and that helps explain the entrepreneurial and scientific creativity that generated the crucial technological breakthroughs. However, as E. A. Wrigley has argued in numerous publications, without new sources of energy, even the most innovative societies faced limits to growth. So, to explain the vast changes that have created today’s world, we need to focus on the breakthrough innovations that released new flows of energy that allowed modern societies to escape the constraints of the organic economy.<sup>9</sup> Here is our second, and perhaps most crucial, driver of modern growth: the vast new flows of energy unleashed by the fossil fuels revolution.

We can call this driver of growth the “fossil fuels driver.” It was very specific in its operation, and it was completely unexpected.

The Industrial Revolution – writes Wrigley – was unexpected by contemporaries. ... Like Pandora and her husband when [Pandora’s box] was opened, nothing in their past experience had prepared people at the time for what was to follow. The possibility of a transformation which would radically enhance the productive powers of society was at the time generally dismissed as idle optimism.<sup>10</sup>

Only in the mid-nineteenth century did economists of the generation of Arnold Toynbee, W. S. Jevons, and Karl Marx begin to understand that coal might generate growth on a scale that market forces alone could not explain. Without fossil fuels, modern societies are unthinkable. As Wrigley puts it, “An industrial revolution is physically impossible without access to energy on a scale



**Figure 10.3** Increasing global energy supplies, 1850–2000, adapted from Crosby, *Children of the Sun*, 162.

which does not exist and cannot be secured in organic economies.”<sup>11</sup> Figure 10.3 gives some sense of the contribution of fossil fuel energy to today’s world. To appreciate the importance of fossil fuels, it is enough to imagine what would happen if electricity generation ceased, gas supplies were cut, water pumps shut down, and supplies of oil and gasoline dried up overnight, forcing the global economy to depend on flows of energy no larger than those of 1850. After an initial period of chaotic and violent adaptation, the entire world would be driven back to the pre-industrial era of organic energy.

These crude distinctions between different drivers of mobilization and growth can help illuminate many aspects of Inner Eurasia’s history in the era of fossil fuels because they raise a fundamental question: What is the most effective way of mobilizing the energy bonanza of the fossil fuels revolution? How could traditional mobilizational systems best tame and harness the staggering energies of the fossil fuels driver?

Once fossil fuels technologies existed, it was clear that the power and wealth of entire mobilizational systems would depend on exploiting those technologies as effectively as possible. In Russia, those possibilities had been glimpsed even in the eighteenth century; in 1771, the Russian government offered James Watt a salary of £1,000 just on the rumor that he was building an improved steam engine.<sup>12</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the importance of fossil fuels was increasingly apparent because the first countries to mobilize fossil fuel

energy on a large scale generated astonishing economic, political, and military power within just a few generations. By the late nineteenth century they were global superpowers and ruled global empires. Powered by the ability to mobilize the energy of fossil fuels, industrialization had generated revolutionary new forms of transportation, including steamships and railways, which slashed the costs of moving people, goods, and armies across continents and oceans. Industrialization had also transformed military technology. “In terms of effective firepower the disparity between the rifle of World War One and the Napoleonic musket was greater than between the musket and the bow and arrow.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, industrialization drove technological and scientific creativity, as investors, entrepreneurs, and governments sought new ways to profit directly or indirectly from the bonanza of cheap energy.

### *THE FOSSIL FUELS REVOLUTION IN INNER EURASIA: NEW CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES*

How should Inner Eurasian governments react to these revolutionary changes? Did their traditional mobilizational strategies prepare them to exploit the fossil fuels bonanza effectively?

The mobilizational machine built up in Muscovy and Russia over several centuries, like that of most traditional empires, was dominated by “direct mobilization.” Market forces, or “commercial mobilization,” played a subordinate role. In the past, direct mobilization had proved very effective even at innovating, because you could buy and deploy new technologies developed elsewhere. This is what Muscovite governments had done in the seventeenth century when faced with the challenge of gunpowder warfare. It was what the Mongol Empire had done when it hired Chinese siege equipment and military engineers, or scribes and financial managers.

But fossil fuels technologies were more complex than the gunpowder technologies of the seventeenth century. Would they work without the constant flow of large and small innovations and the careful managerial techniques generated within market economies? Would not excessive government control stifle innovation and investment? And could Russian governments learn to protect the fundamental institutions of property, banking, and law that were necessary for an effective and innovative market economy? If the market driver was in fact an essential ingredient of the fossil fuels revolution, Russia’s traditional mobilizational methods would need a fundamental renovation.

These distinctions between different drivers of growth may help explain what might otherwise seem an anomalous feature of Inner Eurasia’s modern history, and that of neighboring China. In the twentieth century, modern states in Russia and China achieved spectacular rates of industrialization *after* abolishing the market driver. To many, that was proof that capitalism and markets were not essential for the building of modern societies. For a time, the mobilizational strategies of the agrarian *smychka* seemed to work surprisingly well, even in the era of fossil fuels. However, in the late twentieth century it became clear that

strategies of direct mobilization were less effective at managing mature fossil fuels economies, in all of which the market driver has played a significant role.

These distinctions between different drivers of growth are much easier to see in retrospect than they were at the time. And governments had to make difficult decisions. As they faced the complex challenge of keeping up with a rapidly industrializing West, we see governments in Russia, as in many other late-industrializing countries, twisting and turning in a pragmatic search for a workable middle ground that would allow modern forms of growth while preserving as much as possible of the traditional mobilizational structures on which their power was based. Debates over these complex challenges would drive fundamental policy decisions in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and again in the early decades of the Soviet era.

What was obvious to Chinese and Russian leaders after the Opium Wars and the Crimean War was the terrifying increase in the military and economic power of Europe. Tonio Andrade has argued that Chinese gunpowder technology did not lag significantly behind that of the West even in the eighteenth century. But by the mid-nineteenth century, “the Chinese and British were in two different historical eras.” The Chinese were still in an era of cold weapons; the British had entered an era of “hot weapons,” manufactured and used with entirely new levels of scientific skill and precision.<sup>14</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, the challenge was particularly urgent for China, whose military technologies had stagnated during almost a century of relative peace after the defeat of the Zunghar Empire. Suddenly, it found itself threatened by highly industrialized European rivals who arrived by sea. China had rarely faced the danger of sea-borne invasion, and never faced iron-clad gunships with cannon, so it was completely unprepared, and its leaders had little time to consider how best to react. The Russian Empire, however, was protected by its location within Inner Eurasia. That gave Russian governments more time to consider their options.

This chapter will describe how the Russian heartlands were affected by the global changes of the late nineteenth century. The next chapter will focus on the rest of Inner Eurasia, which was, as yet, largely unaffected by the fossil fuels revolution. It will trace the continuing momentum of Russian expansion in a rapidly industrializing world, and the slow withdrawal of a declining China from its Inner Eurasian Empire.

### *THE IMPERIAL HEARTLAND: 1850–1900*

Defeat in the Crimea forced Russia’s rulers to take industrialization seriously. Before that war, the Russian Empire still looked like a global superpower. It was the largest contiguous empire in the world; it had the largest army in Europe; and it overshadowed Inner Eurasia and eastern Europe. It had even taken small steps towards industrialization. In the 1840s, industrial production grew rapidly from a small base, as the number of factories and mills rose from c.5,500 in 1833 to 9,848 in 1850, many of them using steam engines. Growth was particularly rapid in cotton production, and the first railways linked St. Petersburg to the royal palace of Tsarskoe Tselo and to Moscow.<sup>15</sup> Russia’s

many military and diplomatic successes in the early nineteenth century explain why defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) came as such a shock. Like the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century, the Crimean War exposed dangerous weaknesses in Russia's mobilizational system.

## THE DILEMMAS OF REFORM

Problems began with the army. Russia's army was expensive because it was huge, and permanently under arms. The costs of the Crimean War brought the government close to bankruptcy. Lifelong (or virtually lifelong) military service made it difficult to expand the size of the army in wartime because there were few trained reserves. Moving the army rapidly from front to front was difficult because of Russia's size and its pre-industrial, horse- and oxen-powered transportation networks. In 1860, Russia had only 1,600 kilometers of rail and even in 1870 it had only 8,000 kilometers of paved military roads.<sup>16</sup> Poor transportation made it difficult to supply soldiers even with basic necessities such as clean drinking water, which helps explain the poor health of Russian troops. These weaknesses were compounded by rigidity in the methods used to recruit, train, and support an army based on the archaic institution of serfdom.

In 1853, the government responded to invasion as it had in 1812. It launched a massive recruitment drive that added a million new troops to a standing army of 980,000 men. However, resistance to recruitment and unrest in the borderlands meant that most troops were deployed not in Crimea but in Poland, the Caucasus, or in regional garrisons. In any case, there were no railway lines to Crimea. So, for much of the war, Russia's enemies, who had brought their armies and supplies by sea, outnumbered the Russians.

The war exposed the limitations of Russian weaponry. Most Russian soldiers still used smoothbore muskets that had changed little since the time of Peter the Great.<sup>17</sup> They had a range of about 60 paces, while the Minié rifles of their opponents had a range of 200 paces. Allied artillery proved its superiority during the siege of Sevastopol, inflicting huge casualties. Russia's cannon were smoothbore weapons, with less accuracy and a shorter range; and their opponents had much more ammunition.<sup>18</sup> Finally, it became clear that a modern army required better educated and motivated troops. While the Russian mobilizational system produced large numbers of tough, courageous, and often ingenious soldiers, most were also illiterate and poorly trained. This was hardly surprising as both serfowners and village communes had an interest in sending to the army their least healthy, least able, and least cooperative members.

These problems went to the heart of the Russian system, because the army was so deeply embedded in Russian society. Reforming the army would mean transforming Russian society as a whole, just as the building of Muscovy's cavalry armies had transformed the lives of Muscovite nobles and peasants.

Nicholas I died in 1855. A year later, his son Alexander II (r. 1855–1881) agreed to peace terms at a conference in Paris. Not since Narva in 1700 had the Russian Empire suffered such humiliation, and many in government circles

began to think that major reforms were overdue. P. A. Valuev, a future Minister of Internal Affairs, wrote in 1855:

in waging war with half of Europe it was impossible any longer to hide behind the curtain of official self-congratulations to what degree and precisely in what areas of state power we lagged behind our enemies. It turned out that our fleet lacked exactly those ships and our army exactly those weapons needed to equalize the combat.<sup>19</sup>

But what needed to be reformed? What should be preserved? And how should the government tackle the delicate task of renovating its mobilizational machinery to deploy modern technologies, while keeping the machine working at almost full power?

### THE “GREAT REFORMS”

In the decade after the Crimean War, the government of Alexander II launched a series of fundamental reforms known as the “Great Reforms.” These reflected a widespread conviction in government circles that reform required more than the introduction of new technologies. It also required a more fundamental social, economic, and legal renovation to incorporate some of the advantages of the market driver and, perhaps, even some degree of political freedom.

Within the circle of advisers around the new monarch, many believed it was necessary to abolish serfdom itself, the foundation of Russia’s mobilizational system since the seventeenth century. Dmitrii Miliutin, who would preside over a massive reform of the army in the 1870s, argued that serfdom blocked military reform by preventing the introduction of shorter terms of service to build a trained reserve. This was because those demobilized from the army were automatically freed from serfdom, so that short terms of service would in practice mean a slow, de facto abolition of serfdom. Much better, he argued, to cut the knot of serfdom and recruit soldiers from the whole population, but for shorter terms. Others within the nobility and the upper bureaucracy were persuaded by the argument of economic liberals: that there was a link between freedom and economic growth. Growth, they argued, would be stifled as long as landlords relied on their monopolistic rights to serf labor, rather than having to pay wages. And peasants would continue to work inefficiently as long as they were not paid. It was vital, they argued, to encourage market forces that could encourage innovation and raise productivity in the country’s most important sector, agriculture. Perhaps, at last, Russia had to turn from extensive to more intensive, market-driven strategies of growth. As early as 1841, a landowner told a government official:

A free man knows that if he does not work he is not going to be fed for nothing, and as a result he works hard. Here is my own experience: twenty *versts* from my estate of Zemenki, I have some unsettled land which I have worked using my own peasants, not under *barshchina* [labor dues or *corvée*], but by hiring them under a free contract. The same peasants who idle about on *barshchina* work extremely hard there and are even willing to work on holidays, as long as no one stops them. And they so value this work that they are reluctant even to annoy the overseer.<sup>20</sup>

Some nobles and officials argued that serfdom, like slavery, was simply wrong. Others argued that serfdom would provoke increasingly dangerous peasant revolts like the terrifying Pugachev uprising in the late eighteenth century.

Yet most nobles and officials still found it hard to imagine Russian society without the coercive ties of serfdom. As one official recalled:

[Noble] protests [against reform] expressed in vigorous terms more or less the same idea – that the emancipation of the serfs was premature; the result of the change, ... would be that the estate owners would remain without working hands, the peasants because of their natural indolence would not work even for themselves, the productivity of the state would decrease, causing general inflation, famine, disease, and nationwide misery. At the same time would come insubordination on the part of the peasants, local disorders followed by widespread rioting – in a word, they predicted another Pugachev rebellion with all its horrors and with the addition of a “deeply plotted” democratic revolution.<sup>21</sup>

As one noble put it, “Why change that political system that made [Russia] a first-class power in the world? To undermine its foundations, everything that constitutes its strength and essence, is ill-advised and dangerous.”<sup>22</sup>

Paradoxically, Russia’s long-established traditions of elite discipline allowed the government to introduce major reforms against the resistance of most nobles. In 1856, Alexander II invited the nobility to discuss how to reform the system:

the existing system of serf-owning cannot remain unchanged. It is better to begin abolishing serfdom from above than to wait for it to begin to abolish itself from below. I ask you, gentlemen, to think of ways of doing this. Pass on my words to the nobles for consideration.<sup>23</sup>

As Alexander should have expected, Russia’s traditional political culture discouraged political initiatives, and nobles met his invitation with silence. When the government did get a more positive response, it was too radical. Nobles in Tver’ province interpreted Alexander’s invitation as a step towards a consultative political system that might compensate nobles politically for the loss of authority over their serfs. In 1862, the Tver’ nobility went even further, calling for an elected assembly representing the people as a whole. The government rejected the idea outright.

In 1861, the government abolished serfdom unilaterally. One of its primary goals was to avoid the twin dangers of revolt from below or a coup from above by balancing the gains and losses of nobles and peasants. The Emancipation Statute abolished serfdom in law, and deprived landlords of most police powers over their peasants. It granted ex-serfs full possession of their households, and temporary access to the household allotments (*usad’by*) they had farmed for their own use. It also introduced a complex mechanism by which peasants could collectively buy the land they farmed from their landlords, using long-term government loans. Under this mechanism, which eventually became compulsory for both nobles and former serfs, peasant communes were obliged



to pay off government mortgages in the form of “redemption payments” over 49 years. But the communes would continue to own the land collectively and redistribute it periodically to individual households, preserving the ancient tradition of “collective responsibility” for the redemption payments. By limiting the amount and inflating the price of the land that peasant communes could purchase, the government ensured that few peasants would be self-sufficient. This displeased the peasants, but guaranteed landlords a supply of cheap wage labor to replace free serf labor.

These arrangements tied peasants to their allotments and to their communes for many decades, slowing permanent migration to the towns, even as rapid population growth reduced the average size of allotments. Nevertheless, the severing of ties with their landlords forced peasants to engage more with market forces. As the English observer, Mackenzie Wallace, noted, as long as they were the property of their masters, most peasants had lived in a patriarchal world that shielded them from the market:

If the serfs had a great many ill-defined obligations to fulfill [under serfdom] – such as the carting of the master’s grain to market ... they had, on the other hand, a good many ill-defined privileges. They grazed their cattle during a part of the year on the manor land; they received firewood and occasionally logs for repairing their huts; sometimes the proprietor lent them or gave them a cow or a horse when they had been visited by the cattle plague or the horse stealer; and in times of famine they could look to their master for support. All this has now come to an end. Their burdens and their privileges have been swept away together, and been replaced by clearly defined, unbending, unelastic legal relations. They now have to pay the market price for every stick of firewood which they burn, for every log which they require for repairing their houses, and for every rood of land on which to graze their cattle. Nothing is now to be had gratis. ... If a cow dies or a horse is stolen, the owner can no longer go to the proprietor with the hope of receiving a present, or at least a loan without interest, but must, if he has no ready money, apply to the village usurer, who probably considers 20 or 30 per cent as a by no means exorbitant rate of interest.<sup>24</sup>

Neither peasants nor landlords were happy with the reform, and there were protests from above and below. However, the reformers balanced the gains and losses with considerable skill, so that landlords and peasants soon came to grudging terms with the reforms. Peasant disturbances faded away within two years, and upper-class resentment dissipated in the gentry grumbling that Tolstoy described in *Anna Karenina*.

The abolition of serfdom cleared the way for other reforms. In 1874, Dmitrii Miliutin, the Minister of War, carried through the most fundamental military reform since Peter the Great. From henceforth, the army would recruit from all classes, and recruits would be released into the trained reserve after terms of service that were reduced from 7 years to 18 months for all with secondary education and to just 6 months for those with university education.<sup>25</sup> Officer training was improved, and recruits were taught reading and writing. This change would help raise literacy in society as a whole. In the late eighteenth century, only 6 percent of Russia’s population was literate. By 1850 the

proportion had risen to 19 percent, and by 1913 to 54 percent, as a result of both education within the army and the spread of primary education.<sup>26</sup> The military reforms made a difference that was apparent in Russia's next major war, against Turkey, in 1877. But the limits of Russian power became apparent once again at the 1878 Conference of Berlin, when the major European powers imposed a treaty denying Russia many of the fruits of victory, including the creation of a powerful Bulgarian state that would have enhanced Russian influence in the Balkans.

In 1864, the government established elected local government assemblies, or *zemstva*, and reformed the judicial system. These were significant gestures towards democratization, but their real impact was limited. Though separated from the bureaucracy and elected by all classes, the *zemstva* had limited administrative and fiscal powers and could be overruled by local governors. In practice, they were dominated by the nobility. The judicial reform introduced open courts, trial by jury, and some degree of judicial independence, but much of the population remained beyond their jurisdiction, and in the 1870s, as it faced the beginnings of a revolutionary movement, the government bypassed the new courts by introducing martial law in many provinces. These and other reforms, including a relaxation of the censorship and of government control over the universities, showed some willingness to relax the central government's grip on society as a whole. But in practice, like the local government reforms of Ivan IV (which also introduced elections), their real effect may have been to enhance the government's power by reducing the authority of the landowning class and increasing that of government officials.

Nearly bankrupt at the end of the Crimean War, the government also reformed its finances by shifting the burden of taxation towards indirect taxes and commercial activity. The poll tax, established by Peter the Great, was abolished in 1885; in practice it was replaced by the redemption dues that peasants now paid for their land. The shift away from direct taxes showed the increasing importance of market forces. Greater shares of government revenue now came from indirect taxes such as the excise on vodka sales (which accounted for up to 20–35 percent of revenue for most of the nineteenth century), from protective tariffs on imported goods (whose contribution rose from 12 percent in 1877 to 33 percent in the 1890s), and from the state-managed railways.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Though powerful, the government was not the only shaper of economic and social change. Many other forces were in play, and in the late nineteenth century the market driver played an increasing role as Russia began to industrialize. But the exact nature and speed of Russia's evolution towards capitalism has been the subject of long and complex debates that began in the late nineteenth century. It may be helpful to distinguish between three main interpretations.

First, given the power and reach of the Russian autocracy, many historians have focused on the government's leading role in economic and industrial

change. Alexander Gerschenkron argued that industrialization really began only in the 1890s, when Sergei Witte, the Finance Minister of Tsar Alexander III (r. 1881–1894), introduced a strategy of government-led industrialization. His approach was modeled on the protectionist strategies used by the USA in the early nineteenth century and theorized by the German economist Friedrich List.<sup>27</sup> The government introduced high tariffs both to raise revenue and to protect its infant industries; it maintained pressure on the peasantry to pay redemption dues; and it placed the ruble on the gold standard in order to raise foreign loans for industrial development. With the money raised from taxation, tariffs, and loans, the government funded a massive program of railway building, with the Trans-Siberian railway as its centerpiece, and offered subsidies for the mining and metallurgical industries that would supply the energy and metals needed for the railways.

A second interpretation stresses the failure of economic and political modernization in late Tsarist Russia, and the preservation of traditional mobilizational structures. It argues that Tsarist attempts at modernization failed to generate rapid industrialization, but did create many of the tensions that would lead to revolution. Robert Allen, for example, argues that “The tsars did not lay the groundwork for rapid, capitalist development. In the absence of the communist revolution and the Five-Year Plans, Russia would have remained as backward as much of Latin America or, indeed, South Asia.”<sup>28</sup> Traditional legal, social, and political structures and limited or uncertain property rights stifled entrepreneurial activity, discouraged foreign investment, and stunted growth in the largest sector of all, agriculture, creating a small but discontented industrial working class and massive rural unrest.

A third interpretation sees the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of vibrant economic growth and rapid industrialization. Independently of the government’s plans, powerful commercial forces were at work, laying the foundations for a vigorous market economy. In this view, an eventual breakdown was far from inevitable. The system collapsed mainly because of a failure to manage the tensions caused by rapid growth. This position has been defended vigorously by Paul Gregory.<sup>29</sup> The argument that follows borrows much from Gregory’s research and from his interpretation of the economic and social history of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But it emphasizes in particular the role of fossil fuels and the technologies needed to exploit them.

Gregory argues that there was significant economic growth even before the 1890s. Population growth was an important driver of economic growth, as the empire’s population grew from 74 million in 1858 to 128 million in 1897, and 178 million in 1914. Its human resources had more than doubled in 50 years. The peasant population alone grew from 32 million in 1857 to more than 90 million by 1914 as a result of natural increase.<sup>30</sup> Population growth was driven partly by improved medical knowledge and services. Boris Mironov has tracked changing demographic patterns in some detail, showing that, as mortality rates fell faster than fertility rates, populations increased particularly fast from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> In the same period, Russia’s national income rose

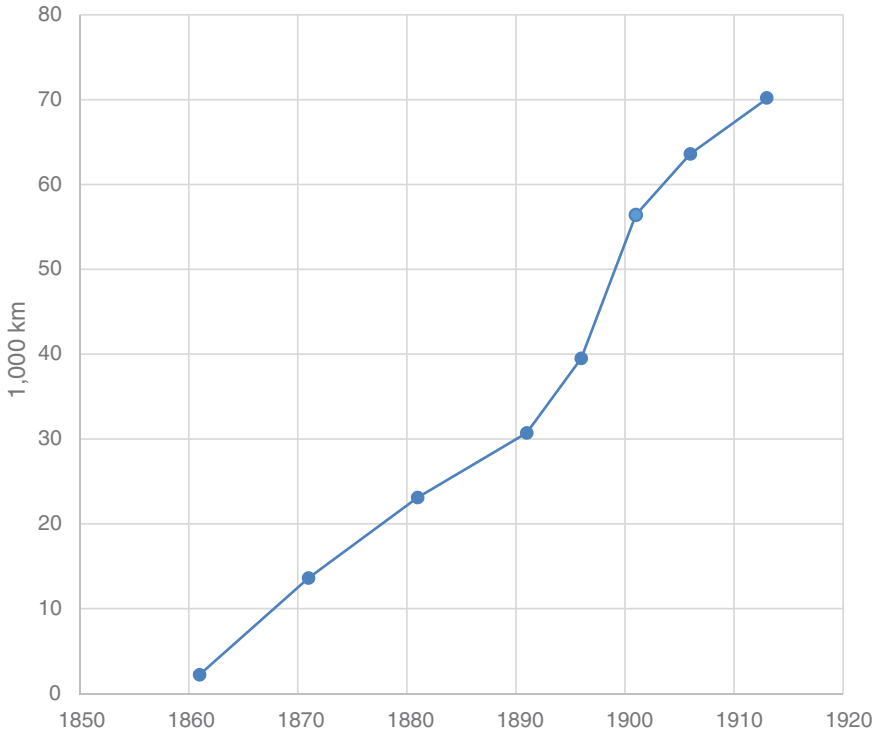
by almost four times, even more rapidly than its population, which means there was also a significant, if modest, increase in per capita output (c.85 percent). Between 1861 and 1913 the average rate of growth of total output was similar to that of other major industrialized countries. It was surpassed only by the USA, Canada, Australia, and Sweden.<sup>32</sup>

As Gerschenkron argued, the building of a national railway network was another powerful driver of growth, as it was in all countries with large land areas, because it slashed transportation costs by land and cheapened the movement of labor and of export goods, particularly grain, cotton, and textiles. Indeed, the geographer Halford Mackinder, writing in 1904, argued that railways were revolutionizing geopolitics by allowing such rapid movement of troops and supplies over land, that for the first time in history, large land empires could emerge as global superpowers.

A generation ago steam and the Suez canal appeared to have increased the mobility of sea-power relatively to land-power. Railways acted chiefly as feeders to ocean-going commerce. But trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heartlands of Euro-Asia, in vast areas of which neither timber nor accessible stone was available for road-making. Railways work the greater wonders in the steppe, because they directly replace horse and camel mobility, the road stage of development here having been omitted.<sup>33</sup>

As early as the 1860s, the government started offering generous incentives to entrepreneurs willing to build railways or the metallurgical factories needed to manufacture track and rolling stock. The empire's railway network grew from 2,000 kilometers in 1861 to over 30,000 kilometers in 1891 (Figure 10.4). By the 1890s, the spectacular imperial successes of the other Great Powers and the equally spectacular decline of traditional powers such as the Ottoman and Qing empires had persuaded the Russian government that it had to support economic growth more aggressively. Under Sergei Witte, an entrepreneurial Minister of Finance of non-noble birth who had risen through the railway administration, the government began a massive program of railway building. Its centerpiece was the Trans-Siberian railway, 8,000 kilometers long, with hundreds of bridges, cuttings, and tunnels. It reached from Moscow to Manchuria and Vladivostok.

Railways helped unleash the market driver, particularly in agriculture. Cheaper transportation increased labor mobility and stimulated grain exports, mainly through Odessa. In the middle of the century, only 2 percent of the Russian grain harvest was exported; by 1900 Russia was exporting almost 18 percent, and Russia had become one of the world's largest exporters of grain.<sup>34</sup> Grain exports increased despite contemporary claims, echoed by many historians, that Russia was undergoing a serious agrarian crisis. There was indeed an agrarian crisis in the most densely populated central agrarian regions; but growth was more rapid outside the old core area of Muscovy, particularly in the Baltic provinces, western Siberia, and the Pontic steppes. In the late



**Figure 10.4** The Russian railway network, 1861–1913. Adapted from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 437. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

nineteenth century, Russian grain production grew as fast as in Germany, by three times. Only the USA exceeded this rate of growth. Between 1883 and 1901, Gregory argues that agricultural output grew at 2.55 percent per annum, which was twice the rate of population growth. Furthermore, population growth did not necessarily mean rural impoverishment. On the contrary, the 26 percent increase in total output of consumption goods per capita between 1887 and 1904 must reflect, at least in part, a rise in average rural consumption levels. One sign of such modest improvements in rural living standards is that the price of land rose, as did the wages of agricultural laborers.<sup>35</sup>

Railway building encouraged growth in the production of coal, iron, and manufactured goods. Between 1891 and 1901, as the length of the Russian railway network doubled, so did production of coal and oil, while the output of iron almost tripled. By some estimates, industrial production grew in the 1890s at the astonishing rate of 8 percent.<sup>36</sup> In the late nineteenth century, hand power still dominated smaller manufacturers. But the number of steam engines increased in large enterprises such as the machine-building works of the capital, from c.6,400 in 1887 to 21,000 in 1908, while their total horsepower increased from 166,000 in 1887 to 1,230,000 in 1908. By 1908 steam power

already accounted for 87 percent of industrial power consumption. However, even in the very largest plants most secondary operations were still carried out by hand.<sup>37</sup>

The revolutionary nature of these changes is perhaps most apparent in the Pontic steppes, the eastern part of modern Ukraine. By 1900, the Pontic steppes had witnessed all three of the dominant technologies of the Holocene era, beginning with pastoralism, which was in decline, followed by farming, which was on the rise, and ending with industrialization which was just beginning. In the nineteenth century, agricultural production increased rapidly on the region's rich black soils, turning the "wild field" of the Middle Ages into the bread basket of the Russian Empire. But parts of the Pontic steppes were also transformed into one of Russia's first modern industrial regions, because the steppes contained coal and metal ores as well as farmlands. The vast reserves of coal in the Donets basin (the Donbass) were first discovered in 1721, during the reign of Peter the Great. By 1795 Donbass coal was providing coking coal for an iron works at Lugansk.<sup>38</sup> Coal production remained small scale until stimulated by the arrival of railways. Donets coal drove steam engines and railways, while its coke fueled iron and steel works that made rails and rolling stock using iron ore from the Krivoy Rog region near Kharkovsk. Railways built with Ukrainian iron and steel and driven by Ukrainian coal cheapened grain exports and, when coupled with the mining of coal and metal ores, helped turn Ukraine into a major industrial center.

In the 1870s, a Welsh engineer, John Hughes, established iron works in the Donbass to supply rails under government contract, and in 1885 a railway line was built linking the Donets to the iron ores of the Krivoy Rog. Yuzovka, the town Hughes founded, is modern Donetsk (Figure 10.5). Nikita Khrushchev would arrive in 1908 and spend much of his youth here, working as a miner. His biographer, William Taubman, describes the town's early history:

John Hughes's British technicians and Russian and Ukrainian workers erected a vast industrial complex, including mines, blast furnaces, rolling mills, metal-working factories, and repair and other workshops. In due course, railroad spurs extended to several mines in and around the town. By 1904 the population of Yuzovka and environs had climbed to forty thousand; by 1914 it had reached seventy thousand. The Donbas is an area the size of Vermont; in 1913 its mines produced 87 percent of Russia's coal.<sup>39</sup>

For immigrants like Khrushchev, Yuzovka epitomized the worst aspects of capitalism. English workers lived in a special "English colony," with English cottages supplied with running water and electricity and built along tree-lined streets. Most Russian workers lived in bleak ghettos. One wrote: "the ground was black; so were the roads. Not a tree was to be seen near the mine, not even a bush; no pond, or even a stream. And beyond the mine, as far as the eye could see, only the monotonous, sunburned steppe."<sup>40</sup> Khrushchev's father, Sergei, had lived in workers' barracks with 50–60 in a dormitory, sleeping on plank beds with ropes stretched across the room on which they could hang their



**Figure 10.5** John Hughes's home in Yuzovka.

clothing. The night shift slept in the beds left by the day shift. In the Yuzovka mines, workers got used to crawling through unsafe, waterlogged shafts that were so hot that some miners worked naked.<sup>41</sup>

By 1900, Ukraine had replaced the Urals as Russia's major iron-producing region. In the Pontic steppes, we see a new ecological imperialism, the mobilization, with the aid of modern industrial technologies and fossil fuels, of agricultural and industrial resources that had been unusable as long as the steppes were ruled by pastoral nomads. What had been colonial borderlands were now integral parts of the Russian mobilizational system.

In the late nineteenth century, market forces and independent entrepreneurial activity played as important a role in economic development as government policy. Foreign capital, foreign entrepreneurs such as John Hughes, and imported technologies were crucial to industrialization. In this respect, Ukraine's experience was very different from that of an older industrial region, the Urals, whose iron industry dated from the time of Peter the Great. In 1891, there was only one modern iron producer in the Urals, which operated in partnership with a French company, while in Ukraine, with many more foreign entrepreneurs, there were modern blast furnaces and rolling mills.<sup>42</sup> Even most industrial research came from abroad, despite the increasingly impressive achievements of Russian scientists such as Mendeleev, who did important research on the chemistry and geology of oil in the 1880s.

Before the twentieth century, there was little contact between Russian science and Russian industry.<sup>43</sup>

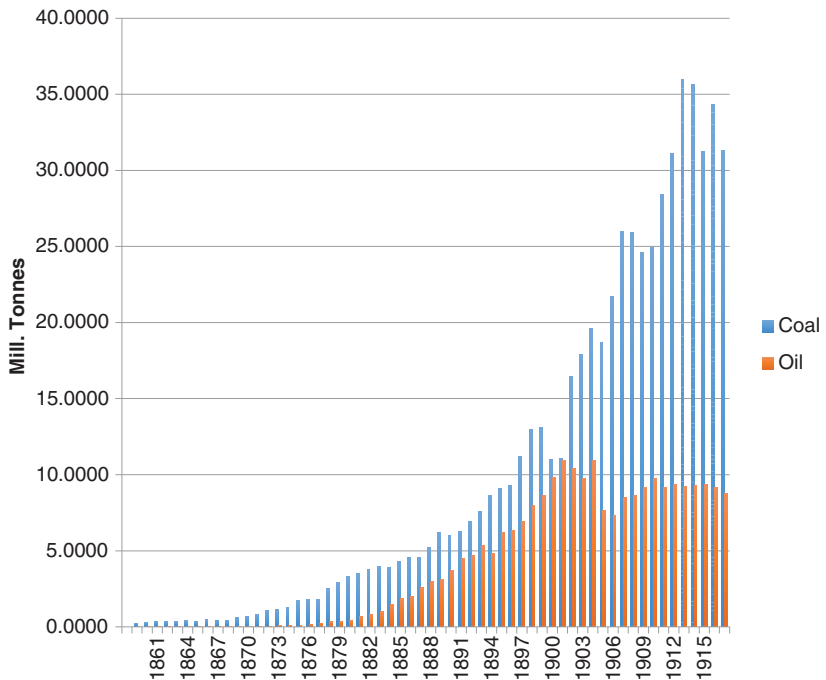
Foreign capital and expertise played a particularly crucial role in Russia's nascent oil industry. Near Baku, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, oil seeping to the surface had been used since ancient times. Marco Polo described how naphtha was exported on camels, and in 1636, the German traveler Olearius saw petroleum being sold as a medicine and a lamp fuel. Though conquered briefly in the 1790s, the Baku region came under permanent Russian control after the 1813 treaty with Persia. As early as 1825, there were 125 shallow wells in the Baku region, but none were more than 30 meters deep and most were both primitive and shallow. Oil was extracted with buckets or by soaking it in rags.<sup>44</sup> Steam-powered drills appeared in the mid-1860s and the first gusher was produced at a depth of 45 meters in 1870. In 1870, the Russian government allowed foreign investors into the region. Many came, including Alfred Nobel in 1873. Oil was relatively cheap to produce in Baku because it lay near the surface, and, after a Rothschilds loan allowed the building of a pipeline to Batum on the Black Sea, it could be transported cheaply to European and American markets, where it was used at first in the form of kerosene for lighting. Cheap production and transportation allowed Russian producers to undercut American producers, so the industry attracted foreign investment and grew rapidly in the 1880s. The Nobel consortium was particularly important in Baku and Grozny.

However, by 1900 oil wells had to be dug deeper, and as oil prices fell and costs of extraction rose, Russian firms reacted defensively, not by investing in more modern equipment but by cutting production. This was more in the spirit of "direct mobilization" than capitalism. In the coal industry, too, Russian producers responded to the challenge of mining at greater depths by cutting production, forming a producers' syndicate, *Produgol*, in 1902, and passing higher costs on to consumers.<sup>45</sup> These reactions suggest that Russian traditions of monopolistic control over valuable resources still limited the effectiveness of the market driver.

These early attempts to manage Russia's energy resources capture some of the differences between the market driver of growth and traditional methods of direct mobilization which were extensive rather than intensive. Given abundant resources, both strategies of mobilization worked well, but the traditional driver was, for the most part, less innovative and more wasteful of energy, labor, resources, and land. Still, however it was done, the Russian Empire was beginning to learn how to mobilize its vast reserves of energy and raw materials. Figure 10.6 charting coal and oil production from 1859 to 1917 shows the increasing importance of fossil fuels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Exports linked the Russian economy more closely to world markets, particularly for grain, timber, oil, and textiles. By 1914 Russian grain exports were second only to those of the USA. Integration into the global economy was helped by the government's decision to put the ruble on the gold standard in 1897, in order to secure international loans for industrial growth. So successful was this maneuver that by 1914, Russia was the world's largest debtor nation,





**Figure 10.6** Chart of coal and oil production, 1859–1917. Data from D’iakonova, *Neft’ i ugol’ v energetike tsarskoi Rossii*, 165–167.

which is surely a sign not of sluggish growth but of rapid integration into the world economy and the growing importance of market forces. Gregory writes:

On the eve of World War I, Russia was the world’s largest debtor. Its currency was backed by gold; the gold ruble exchanged at a fixed and stable rate with the currencies of the other industrialized countries. The stocks and bonds of Russian corporations, state governments, and the imperial government traded actively in financial centers not only in Moscow and Saint Petersburg but also in London, Paris, and Amsterdam. The multinational companies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the Singer Company, Siemens, and Krupp – had branches in Russia. Although foreign companies operating in Russia complained about corruption and the difficulty of obtaining necessary government licenses, the commercial laws of Russia appeared to provide sufficient stability to attract direct investment into Russia.<sup>46</sup>

But early in the twentieth century there were clear limits to Russian economic growth. Particularly in agriculture, most growth was still extensive. Labor productivity grew sluggishly, both in agriculture and industry, and communal land tenure in the villages limited, though it did not entirely block, the commercialization of rural life. Furthermore, the government’s share of the economy, at about 8–10 percent, was probably the highest of all developing countries. Nevertheless, while foreigners complained about the difficult and sometimes corrupt business environment, there was also emerging a body of

Russian corporate law, and flourishing commodity and capital markets.<sup>47</sup> Nor was the government's role in driving economic growth as important as many supposed. It was, after all, confined mostly to the railways, and the closely linked metallurgical and mining sectors.

In so far as prices were set primarily by markets rather than by governments, it makes sense to describe the late Tsarist economy as a market economy, and Russian society as a rapidly evolving capitalist society. Manufacturing output increased rapidly, particularly in the 1890s and in the years just before World War I, and the proletariat, though small, was growing fast. Lenin, who studied such things closely, noted that between 1866 and 1903 the number of factories with more than 16 workers rose from 2,500 to 9,000.<sup>48</sup> But, like Russia's populists (including his own brother), Lenin believed firmly that when it came, a Russian revolution would be a working-class revolution of the peasantry and the urban working classes rather than a bourgeois revolution.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, as Lenin understood, the preservation of the commune did not prevent increasing market activity in the villages, as more and more peasants leased their allotments, hired family members out as wage laborers in cities or other rural areas, sold surplus grain, and, particularly near big cities, engaged in artisan activities. The German historian Oskar Anweiler described Russian workers in this period as "economic amphibians," because they lived both in the traditional rural economy and in Russia's rapidly industrializing cities.<sup>50</sup>

Though still archaic in many areas, Russia's economy was firmly launched on the path towards industrialization, and the market driver was playing an increasingly important role, alongside the direct mobilization of modern technologies. In Gregory's summary:

During the last thirty years of the Russian empire, Russia's economic growth was more rapid than western Europe's, but its rapid population growth held per capita growth to the west European average. The structural changes that occurred in the thirty years preceding World War I were in line with the first thirty years of modern economic growth elsewhere. Russia definitely had begun the process of modern economic growth by the outbreak of World War I.<sup>51</sup>

In 1899, Sergei Witte's assessment was similar. He argued that Russia's economy was in a "state of transition to the capitalist system."

The changes that have taken place in Russian life in the past thirty years have had a direct impact on the conditions of development of our industry and commerce. The emancipation of the peasants from serfdom and the ensuing deep penetration of commercial and monetary relations into rural life, the development of the railroad network and the spread of credit in a variety of forms, the movement of population within the Empire and the settlement of new and hitherto unpopulated borderlands in the south and east, the gradual outflow of manpower from the land to other trades, the growth of cities, and the formation of new industrial regions and centers – all of these circumstances have changed the economic system of the Empire so much that commercial-industrial activity, which once affected the interests of only certain classes of the population, has now embraced the whole country.<sup>52</sup>

## POLITICAL CHANGE AND DECLINING ELITE UNITY

However, rapid economic growth was disruptive. It stirred up discontents at many different levels of society, and in the early twentieth century these discontents, poorly handled by an often incompetent government, would generate a serious revolutionary crisis. But, as Gregory notes, the 1905 and 1917 revolutions followed periods of rapid growth, so they are best understood as growth pains rather than as signs of chronic backwardness.<sup>53</sup> That suggests that, as long as the Russian elite could maintain a degree of cohesion and unity, the mobilizational machine might have contained growing pressure from below as it had many times in the past. Yet economic and social change had also loosened ties within the ruling group, weakening traditional respect for autocracy and creating new elite groups with distinct interests and modern political views. Meeting these complex political and social challenges required strong, clear-sighted, and well-informed leadership. Unfortunately, Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, lacked the political skills of a Peter the Great. Unlike his father, Alexander III, he also failed to listen to his more skillful advisers, and the autocratic Tsarist political system lacked the mechanisms needed to advise him well or steer his policies. A weak and indecisive autocrat struggled to navigate the choppy waters of a rapidly modernizing society.

The Great Reforms loosened the ties that bound Russia's elite groups to the autocracy. Abolishing serfdom cut ancient bonds between the nobility and the autocracy, while newer entrants to Russia's upper classes often had education, commercial skills, influence, ambition, and ability, but fewer ties to autocracy than the traditional nobility. The historian P. N. Miliukov wrote in 1903:

What must be mentioned first is the enormous growth of the politically conscious social elements that make public opinion in Russia. The gentry still play a part among these elements, but are by far not the only social medium of public opinion, as they were before the emancipation of the peasants. Members of the ancient gentry are now found in all branches of public life: in the press, in public instruction, in the liberal professions, not to speak of the state service, and particularly the local self-government. But it would be impossible to say what is now the class opinion of the gentry. The fact is that the gentry are no longer a class; they are too much intermingled with other social elements in every position they occupy, including that of landed proprietors. By this ubiquity the gentry have added to the facilities for the general spread of public opinion; but as a class they influence public opinion in an even smaller measure than in former times.<sup>54</sup>

Russian liberalism and a modern revolutionary movement both emerged soon after the Great Reforms. Both traditions owed their radicalism to the growing importance of the intelligentsia, those within Russia's emerging professional classes who were educated enough to have strong views about government and society, but lacked the traditional privileges that might have bound them to autocracy. The intelligentsia included both *déclassé* nobles and educated non-nobles, whether lawyers, teachers, doctors, veterinarians, statisticians, or agronomists. Many were hired as experts by the *zemstva*, and

some were radicalized by working amongst the peasantry, particularly after the massive famine of 1891. According to one very rough estimate, the size of Russia's emerging professional classes – those earning wages through brain work – increased from about 50,000 in 1850 to about 400,000 by 1900. Russia's entrepreneurial classes also increased, turning the Muscovite merchantry into something like a modern “bourgeoisie.” In 1850, c.246,000 were officially registered as merchants; by 1900 there were 600,000, but there were many more petty traders and entrepreneurs, most of peasant origin.<sup>55</sup>

Russian liberals came, for the most part, from the upper and more educated sectors of the nobility. By the 1890s many “*zemstvo* liberals” had begun to argue for a national consultative assembly or Duma that could easily be established by forming a national equivalent of the provincial *zemstvo*, created in 1864. In 1895, moderate liberals asked the new Tsar, Nicholas II (1894–1917), to create such an elected advisory body. In an early sign of the political rigidity that would lead to his downfall, Nicholas dismissed the proposal as a “senseless dream.” In response, even conservative liberals began organizing a series of national *zemstvo* congresses to discuss possibilities for moderate political reform.

The Russian revolutionary movement also emerged from within Russia's elites, and many of its members shared the traditional elite commitment to unity and discipline, though they also shared the egalitarian goals and the revolutionary élan of the European revolutionary movement. However, its members were generally younger and many were students. The Russian revolutionary movement's distinctive combination of emancipatory goals and a commitment to party discipline is apparent from one of its earliest manifestos, “Young Russia,” which appeared in 1862:

Society is at present divided into two groups, which are hostile to one another because their interests are diametrically opposed ... The party that is oppressed by all and humiliated by all is the party of the common people. Over it stands a small group of contented and happy men. They are the landowners ... the merchants ... the government officials – in short, all those who possess property, either inherited or acquired. At their head stands the tsar. They cannot exist without him, nor he without them. If either falls the other will be destroyed ... There is only one way out of this oppressive and terrible situation which is destroying contemporary man, and that is revolution – bloody and merciless revolution – a revolution that must radically change all the foundations of contemporary society without exception and destroy the supporters of the present regime.<sup>56</sup>

In the 1860s and early 1870s most Russian revolutionaries were “populists.” They had, as yet, little understanding of capitalism or industrialization, and their goal was to liberate the peasantry and create an egalitarian peasant-dominated socialist republic. By the late 1870s, small numbers of populist revolutionaries were forming tight-knit revolutionary groups whose aim was to assassinate Tsar Alexander II. In 1881, one of these groups, *Narodnaya Volya*, or “The People's Will,” succeeded. In 1887, another group that included

Lenin's elder brother, Sasha Ulyanov, was arrested for plotting to assassinate his successor, Alexander III. Its leaders were all executed.

A Russian Marxist movement emerged in the 1880s. Unlike the populists, the Marxists (who would soon include Sasha Ulyanov's younger brother, the young Lenin) did understand the transformative nature of capitalist industrialization. They insisted that Russia, like Europe, would pass through a capitalist phase of rapid growth and accelerating class conflict before building a socialism in which industrial workers, the proletariat, would be the main beneficiaries and the dominant class. No revolutionary group gained broad popular support before the twentieth century. Both Marxists and populists eventually split over the issue of whether to build a broad-based popular movement or to concentrate, instead, on disciplined conspiratorial action to overthrow the existing system.

Russia's conservatives, such as the royal tutor Konstantin Pobedonostsev, argued that the government had already made too many concessions to modernity. Now it was necessary once more to support the autocracy and Russian tradition. To rally this constituency, the government of Alexander III launched aggressive policies of Russification, suppressed regional nationalisms, and supported virulent and sometimes murderous forms of anti-Semitism. Somewhere in the middle of these conflicts were the many nobles and officials committed, like Sergei Witte, to a Russian version of the Meiji reforms in Japan: a rapid transition towards industrialization, presided over by a strong government capable of maintaining stability while developing industry and commerce.

## *DESTABILIZATION AND RESTABILIZATION: 1900–1914*

Between 1900 and 1914, the strains of rapid economic and social change brought the Russian mobilizational machine close to collapse.

### 1900–1906: TEMPORARY BREAKDOWN

The Great Reforms were followed by three decades of relative social calm, despite the emergence of a revolutionary movement and the massive famine of 1891. From the end of the 1890s, popular protests began to increase in both rural and urban areas. During the global slump of 1900, employers fired workers and cut wages, particularly in the metal industries where growth had been most rapid in the 1890s. Industrial production, which had grown at 8 percent per annum in the 1890s, slowed to 1.4 percent per annum between 1900 and 1906.<sup>57</sup> Troops were used to suppress strikes 19 times in 1893, 50 times in 1899, and over 500 times in 1902.<sup>58</sup> The government suppressed strikes with force, and refused to legalize strikes or unions. This guaranteed that when strikes did occur, they would be violent. The government's one attempt to handle industrial protest with more finesse was a fiasco. Between 1901 and 1903,

under a plan proposed by a police official, S. V. Zubatov, it organized official unions. Zubatov wrote:

An autocracy should keep above the classes and apply the principle of “divide and rule.” ... We must create a counter-poison or antidote to the bourgeoisie, which is growing arrogant. Accordingly, we must bring the workers over to us, and so kill two birds with one stone: check the upsurge of the bourgeoisie and deprive the revolutionaries of their troops.<sup>59</sup>

In practice, the Zubatov unions provided government-sponsored training for would-be strikers and unionists. In 1903, Zubatov unions organized strikes in the oilfields of Baku and the industrial regions of Ukraine. Zubatov was sacked.

In rural areas, population growth exacerbated old resentments over land shortage and high taxation, particularly after the famine of 1891. The 1900 slump hurt peasants, because many relied on casual wage-labor and income from domestic industries. In 1902 rural protests broke out in the Ukrainian provinces of Kharkov and Poltava. By 1904, they had spread to most provinces west of the Urals. Rural communes, which the government still thought of as bastions of order, helped organize many protests. Riots often began with communal gatherings at which migrant workers brought news of protests in other regions. From commune meetings, groups of peasants, sometimes armed with pitchforks and clubs, would attack local government offices and destroy tax records, or burn the mansions of their landlords. By 1905, much of the countryside was in revolt.

Within Russia's upper classes, dissidence began to assume more organized forms. In 1902, the historian P. N. Miliukov and an ex-Marxist, P. B. Struve, founded an underground paper called *Liberation* to advocate for a constitutional government. In January 1904 a “Union of Liberation” was formed in St. Petersburg. It demanded an end to autocracy and an elected assembly with real legislative power. Support for “Liberation” came mainly from the non-noble educated and entrepreneurial classes. By 1905, liberalism of some kind was widespread within elite groups. But many of the goals of Russian liberalism were also shared by more radical oppositional groups, many of which saw liberal political reforms as a first step towards revolution. In 1900, a group of Russian Marxists, including Lenin and Martov, founded an illegal Social Democratic paper, *Iskra*, or “The Spark.” In 1903 the same group organized the first Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party. The founding Congress of the party (technically its second Congress) was organized in Brussels in 1903, then moved to London after its members were expelled from Belgium, probably under Russian pressure. During the Congress the party split into a Bolshevik wing, led by Lenin, which stressed party discipline and unity and the importance of a *popular* uprising, and a Menshevik wing, headed by Martov, which was committed to building a broader popular movement. In 1901, populist groups formed a Socialist Revolutionary Party under the leadership of Victor Chernov (1873–1952).

Cutting across and sometimes intertwined with the pressures of economic change were those of ethnic conflict within an increasingly diverse empire in

which official Russification had provoked local nationalisms. Though they originated among the small intelligentsia class, these nationalisms could prove powerful and dangerous if they managed to attract support from the much larger peasant classes in rural areas. Regional nationalisms were particularly developed in areas such as Poland, which had old national traditions. Ukrainian nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century, drawing inspiration from the historical traditions of Kievan Rus' and Lithuania.<sup>60</sup> The works of the great historian Kostomarov and the poet Taras Shevchenko created a powerful historiographical and literary tradition around which a modern sense of national identity would be forged within Ukraine's small intelligentsia. Government attempts to suppress Ukrainian-language writing and scholarship ensured that Ukrainian nationalism would become a significant force within the intelligentsia. In 1897 there appeared a moderate Ukrainian nationalist organization, the General Ukrainian Organization, and in 1900 a revolutionary organization, the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party. Though its roots lay within the Ukrainian intelligentsia, Ukrainian nationalism would prove powerful because, during the revolutionary crises of the early twentieth century, it would attract significant peasant support as well. Nationalist movements also appeared in the Caucasus, the Baltic provinces, and in Central Asia (on which, see Chapter 11). In Georgia, a region with strong national traditions and an ancient national history, Mensheviks found themselves at the head of a national movement that proved particularly powerful because it attracted significant peasant support. Though the key events of the 1905 revolution took place in the Russian heartland, protests in the peripheries destabilized and unnerved the government, and stretched its military resources.<sup>61</sup>

Given the many divisions between its opponents, the Russian government should have been able to cope with the simmering discontent inevitable in a rapidly industrializing society. But the deep humiliation of failure in the Russo-Japanese War, which began in January 1904, helped unite the government's opponents, turning serious difficulties into a potentially fatal crisis. In the major cities, each military defeat sparked new storms of protest during 1904. What finally united the various opposition groups was the Tsar's decision to use force against a peaceful workers' demonstration in St. Petersburg on January 9, 1905. Ironically, the 100,000 or more workers who demonstrated for better working conditions were led by a priest, Father Gapon, who ran a union organized, like the Zubatov unions, under state auspices. The demonstrators' petition reflected the rhetoric police officials thought appropriate on such occasions, but also showed the extent to which liberal slogans were beginning to link different oppositional movements.

We working men of St. Petersburg, our wives and children, and our parents, helpless aged men and women, have come to you, our ruler, in quest of justice and protection. ... The bureaucracy of the government has ruined the country, involved it in a shameful war and is leading Russia nearer and nearer to utter ruin. We, the Russian workers and people, have no voice at all in the expenditure of the huge sums collected in taxes from the impoverished population. We do not even know how our money is spent. The people are deprived of any right to discuss taxes

and their expenditure. The workers have no right to organize their own labour unions for the defence of their own interests. ... The people must be represented in the control of their country's affairs. Only the people themselves know their own needs.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the peaceful nature of the demonstration and its protestations of loyalty, Nicholas ordered the police to disperse the protesters with gunfire and sabers. The police estimated that 130 were killed and 450 wounded. Others put the casualties much higher. All opposition groups now united behind the anti-autocratic program of the liberals. Demonstrations broke out in all major cities. They were supported by workers, intellectuals, and even, on occasion, by government officials. In May, professional associations formed a "Union of Unions." In the industrial town of Ivanovo, an industrial strike committee modeled on Russia's traditional village communes constituted itself as a "Soviet" or "Council" of all workers. Soviets soon sprang up throughout the country. A St. Petersburg Soviet was formed on October 14 under the leadership of a young Marxist revolutionary, Leon Trotsky (1879–1940). Soon, other Soviets looked to it for leadership. Ominously for the government, military discipline began to break down. In May, there was a mutiny near Tashkent; in June, a mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin* in Odessa harbor.

In August 1905, the government made its first significant concession by offering to create a purely consultative elected body. By now, all but the most conservative liberals found such an offer insulting. On September 19, printers went on strike and workers in the two capitals followed suit. On October 7, railway workers stopped work, which prevented the movement of troops, most of whom were still in the Far East. Russia faced the first general strike in its history. Even bank workers and officials of the central ministries stopped work.

In desperation, Nicholas II turned to his former Finance Minister, Serge Witte, for advice. Witte had returned from the USA after negotiating surprisingly favorable peace terms with Japan at the treaty of Portsmouth. Witte persuaded Nicholas to back down. On October 17, in what would become a characteristic pattern of stubborn resistance followed by humiliating backdowns, Nicholas issued the "October Manifesto." The document promised to grant basic civil liberties and establish an elected State Duma that would share legislative authority with the Tsar. This was a change of colossal significance and many protesters were delighted. It seemed to have replaced Russia's traditional autocracy with a constitutional government.

The October Manifesto split the large but fractured anti-Tsarist coalition. Conservative liberals formed an "Octobrist" party representing those willing to accept the Tsar's concessions. But most liberals demanded more. In October, they formed the "Kadet" (Constitutional Democratic) party, with Miliukov as one of its leaders. The Kadets, though dissatisfied with the October Manifesto, insisted on ending the general strike and all revolutionary activity. The October Manifesto seemed to be rallying elite groups around a reformed monarchy.

But popular protests continued. The Petrograd Soviet demanded further concessions to labor, and peasant insurrections peaked in November and



December. In Tashkent, troops fired on a crowd of demonstrators immediately after the publication of the October Manifesto. Then discipline collapsed within the army. Many rank-and-file soldiers stopped obeying orders in the naïve belief that the October Manifesto had abolished existing structures of authority even within the army. Between October and the end of the year, there were mutinies in one third of all military units in European Russia, while mutinies along the Trans-Siberian railway prevented the return of troops from the East. In November, the government lost control of 10 major towns, including Moscow.

Despite the many danger signs, it turned out that divisions within the revolutionary coalition had given the government just enough leverage to survive. Having secured the half-hearted support of leading intellectuals, industrialists, officials, and military leaders, the government began to *look* more stable, and that persuaded many mutinous soldiers to return to barracks. The government offered soldiers improved pay and conditions, and on December 3, it used the army to arrest all 260 members of the St. Petersburg Soviet. Two weeks later, it used units that had mutinied just a few weeks earlier to suppress a working-class insurrection in Moscow. In the same month, troops began to suppress disorders in the Baltic States, Poland, the Caucasus, Siberia, and Central Asia. Early in 1906, the army began to crush disturbances in the countryside, making free use of martial law and the death penalty as it did so. Between 1905 and 1909, the government would execute almost 2,400 people on charges of terrorism; revolutionaries retaliated with at least as many assassinations.<sup>63</sup> In early 1906, the return of troops from Manchuria and a French loan negotiated by Witte helped stabilize the government. In May, just after Witte had negotiated the French loan, Nicholas dismissed him.

As the government regained its balance, Nicholas began whittling away the promises he had made in October 1905. He insisted, first, that the government alone would draft the new constitution, the so-called “Fundamental Laws.” These were published just before the First Duma met in April 1906. The Fundamental Laws established a two-house parliament. The Duma, the lower house, was elected in separate class curia, in which the vote was weighted differently for different classes. In the upper house, the State Council, half of the members were to be appointed by the emperor, while the other half were to be elected by institutions such as the *zemstva*, the Academy of Sciences, and the clergy. On the all-important matter of the government’s essential nature, the laws were contradictory and ambiguous. The Fundamental Laws declared that “Supreme, autocratic power” belonged to the emperor. Yet they also declared that no law could come into force without the consent of both houses of parliament. The emperor retained the right to appoint government ministers at his discretion, and the Duma received limited powers to question the government budget. Article 87 allowed the government to issue laws by decree when the parliament was not in session, though it was required to have them ratified at the next parliamentary sitting.

The first Duma met on April 27, 1906, in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. It had a Kadet majority but included representatives from broad sections of the population, including many peasants and a number of revolutionaries.

The Kadets demanded improvements to the Fundamental Laws, and a redistribution of land to the peasantry. On July 9, six weeks after it met, Nicholas dismissed the first Duma. Duma members threatened a tax strike, army units mutinied in European Russia, Siberia, and Central Asia, rural disorders revived in some regions, and in St. Petersburg there were attempts to organize a new general strike. But attempts to revive the revolutionary movement soon petered out. After July 1906, the government seemed to have regained the initiative.

## 1906–1911: RESTABILIZATION

The government knew it would have to modernize the army and the economy; it would also have to reduce popular discontent and try to reunite Russia's divided elites.

Nicholas understood the first lesson because it was aligned with traditional mobilizational strategies that he could appreciate. The army had to be reformed after the humiliating defeat in Manchuria, and industrial growth had to continue in order to supply the army. These were tasks that could be tackled with cash and the enthusiastic support of the military and Russia's industrialists. During the brief boom after the 1905 revolution, the government launched extensive reforms of the army and navy with the support of many within the Duma.

Military reforms and the huge investments they required revived industrial and economic growth. Agricultural production rose after 1906, stimulated by rising world prices, a series of good harvests, increased use of fertilizers, and, perhaps, by the entrepreneurial attitudes of an emerging class of independent peasants created by the Stolypin reforms, which are described below. Between 1907 and 1913, industrial production grew at 6 percent per annum. By 1913, the Russian Empire was the world's largest exporter of wheat; Russian coal production was exceeded only by that of the USA; and the empire had become a major oil producer.<sup>64</sup> It already had a well-developed manufacturing sector, particularly in textiles and metallurgy, but increasing integration into world markets meant it could also exchange its abundant timber, grain, oil, and textiles for foreign machinery and manufactures.<sup>65</sup>

The second task was to reduce popular discontent, both in the towns and in the countryside. Nicholas had little sympathy for, or understanding of, this task. Many nobles and officials took it more seriously. In early 1906, many feared that peasant discontent could be reduced only by massive land redistributions of the kind proposed by the Kadets. D. F. Trepov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, remarked to Witte, "I am myself a landowner and shall only be too pleased to give away half of my land for nothing as I feel certain that it is the only way of saving the other half for myself."<sup>66</sup> However, P. A. Stolypin, the Prime Minister appointed in July 1906 after the dismissal of the First Duma, proposed an alternative strategy for dealing with rural discontent that was much more congenial to the Tsar because it did not require the sacrifice of gentry lands. Stolypin proposed breaking up the peasant commune and allowing peasants to sell their allotments. This, he argued, would allow less successful peasants to migrate to the towns, while the more successful could buy up the land of those

who left, establish themselves as independent farmers, and build a large, prosperous, and conservative peasant class committed, like the French peasantry, to stability, landownership, and strong government.

In November 1906, before the second Duma met, Stolypin introduced decrees under article 87 of the Fundamental Laws that transferred ownership of peasant allotments to the head of each household, and allowed heads of households to consolidate their land and turn it into private property by separating it from the lands of the commune. Though not ratified by the Duma until 1910, the decrees came into effect immediately. By 1915 about 30 percent of peasant households had requested the transfer of their allotments as private lands, about 22 percent had completed the transfer, and slightly over 10 percent of households had taken the next step of forming consolidated individual farms or *khutors*. In the impoverished and rebellious central provinces, the impact was limited, though; most of the transfers occurred in the western and southern provinces, where private landownership was already common.

Stolypin saw migration as another way of reducing pressure on the land. He encouraged migration to Siberia, the Kazakh steppes, and Central Asia. Large-scale peasant settlement in the Kazakh steppes became more systematic after 1900, a task eased by the legal fiction that the Tsarist government had inherited ownership of the land from the last Kazakh khans. In 1902, a government commission encouraged Russian settlement in the Semirechie region of Central Asia, and between 1903 and 1911 the number of Russians in Semirechie rose from 95,000 to 175,000.<sup>67</sup> The government reduced rail fares for colonists and their baggage and livestock, built special accommodation for them along the railroads, offered cheap government loans and exemption from taxes and recruitment, and set up special stores in regions of settlement.

In 1910, the government allowed migrants to settle even in large parts of Transoxiana, despite Muslim opposition.<sup>68</sup> Not until World War I did the flood of migrants into Central Asia slow, preventing Transoxiana from being transformed as radically as the Kazakh steppes.

The third major lesson of the 1905 revolution was the importance of rebuilding elite cohesion. This, too, was a task that Nicholas failed to understand, unlike his more able ministers. The 1905 revolution showed that with even half-hearted elite support the government could survive; without that support it could not. Gaining elite support meant giving educated Russians a larger role in government, because by 1905 it was widely agreed that managing a complex modern economy meant making use of the many kinds of expertise, scientific, entrepreneurial, administrative, and even military, to be found within Russia's rapidly growing educated classes. Formally, many liberals, particularly in the Kadet party, demanded an all-class democracy. But over the next decade it became clear that even the most radical liberals might settle for a modest widening of the circle of political consultation that would empower elite groups without creating a broadly based democracy. If this analysis is correct, it suggests that the government would have to start cooperating with Russia's elites by conceding at least some of their constitutional demands. Constitutional issues mattered because they would shape relations between the

monarchy and Russia's upper classes, and that relationship would ultimately determine the fate of Russia's traditional mobilizational system.

Nicholas was not the right person to handle such delicate negotiations. He closed the first Duma on July 9. When the second met in February 1907, and turned out to be even more radical than the first, he closed that too, on June 3, 1907. On the same day, on Stolypin's advice, the government issued a decree altering the electoral law to increase the relative influence of electors from rural areas and from the landed gentry. Under the new law, it took 230 landowners to elect a single deputy; 1,000 wealthy business people; 15,000 lower-middle-class electors; 60,000 peasants; and 125,000 urban workers. Strictly, this change to the electoral laws breached the Fundamental Laws. But few protested, and elections under the new law produced a more conservative Duma dominated by the Octobrist party. When the third Duma met, in November 1907, the government found itself dealing for the first time with a parliament with which it shared some common ground. The Octobrist party was particularly supportive of the government's military and agrarian reforms, and for four years it seemed that the government and Duma might be able to collaborate. Stolypin's "coup" had provided the legal and political framework for a reunited ruling class, while preserving the formal structures of constitutional government.

But new divisions soon appeared on issues such as parliamentary control of the defense budget. By 1911, the Octobrist party had split, and in September Stolypin was assassinated in the Kiev Opera House, in the presence of the Tsar, by a former anarchist and police informer, Dmitrii Bogrov. The government lost its last really able Prime Minister as well as most of its support in the Duma. Nicholas now turned increasingly to advisers and ministers who were as isolated and ill-informed as himself, but willing to tell him what he wanted to hear. The breakdown in relations between the Duma and government undermined confidence in the parliamentary system even within the Octobrist party, and exacerbated divisions between the Tsar and Russia's upper classes.

## 1911–1914: STASIS ON THE EVE OF WAR

Between 1911 and 1914, signs of a new revolutionary crisis multiplied in Russia, and though the government had displayed remarkable resilience, there were no guarantees that it would survive a second near-breakdown. Simultaneously, new difficulties appeared in foreign policy, particularly in the Balkans, where the government was tempted to return to the ambitious expansionary plans of Nicholas I and Alexander III. Yet within ruling circles, neither the government nor the reformers could make progress, leaving Russia's elites in a precarious stand-off, on the eve of what we know, in retrospect, would be the largest war ever fought.

In the towns, working-class radicalism revived as industrial growth increased the number of wage workers. One driver of working-class radicalism may have been the arrival of peasants squeezed off their lands as a result of the Stolypin reforms. Being first-generation proletarians, such groups suffered most acutely from the transition to proletarian life and contributed a radical leaven to working-class discontent. A new crisis began in April 1912, when the army was

used to put down strikes in the Lena goldfields in Siberia. Some 270 workers were killed and protest strikes broke out in many parts of the empire. By the first half of 1914, over a million workers were on strike. In St. Petersburg, a general strike began in July 1914, and there were violent clashes between workers and police.

However, in contrast to 1905, there were few uprisings in the countryside, nor was there any sign of organized elite participation, though there can be no doubt that there was widespread upper-class disillusionment with the Tsar and his government. In a famous essay on the balance of forces in Russia on the eve of revolution, Leopold Haimson identified two fundamental divisions within Russian society.<sup>69</sup> One was between the autocracy and broad sections of the elite classes. The other was between the largely Westernized elites, and the peasants and industrial workers of Russia's working classes. Haimson argued that educated Russians were increasingly aware of the extent and danger of the second division, between Russia's privileged classes (the "bourgeoisie" as socialists and workers were beginning to call them) and the working classes (the "dark masses" in the view of many educated Russians). This awareness constrained upper-class dissidence, for it conjured up the specter of a new period of anarchy, perhaps a modern "Time of Troubles," after a violent overthrow of the existing system. This terrifying Hobbesian vision would haunt Russia's elites and restrain their radicalism in the period before 1917.

A rapidly growing economy and a ruling elite fearful of revolution created all the preconditions for the building of an authoritarian capitalist society in the Russian Empire. By 1914, the Russian heartland of Inner Eurasia had entered the era of fossil fuels and was beginning to make some of the fundamental social and economic adjustments needed to survive under the fossil fuels regime. What was missing was a leader with the insight and skill needed to reunite the empire's upper classes in order to maintain political stability during the complex political, economic, and social adjustments of a society on the verge of modernity.

## NOTES

- 1 Cited from Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 11, from *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 1, Ch. 9.
- 2 Crosby, *Children of the Sun*, 60.
- 3 Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, 257.
- 4 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 206–207.
- 5 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 244.
- 6 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 99.
- 7 Elliot, *The Soviet Energy Balance*, 122.
- 8 Brooke, *Climate Change*, 398.
- 9 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 234–235, refers to "the conjunction of two capitalisms," but here I prefer the term "drivers" because, in the twentieth century, it became clear that one of the drivers could work in environments, such as the planned economy of the Soviet Union, that cannot usefully be described as capitalist.

- 10 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 51.
- 11 Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, 193.
- 12 Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, 251.
- 13 Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, 84.
- 14 Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age*, 237.
- 15 For the previous three sentences, Ananich, “Russian Economy and Banking System,” 400.
- 16 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 276–277.
- 17 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 539–540.
- 18 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 260, 274; Leo Tolstoy, who was an officer during the siege of Sevastopol, left a vivid literary account of the siege in *Sebastopol Sketches*.
- 19 Cited in Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 266.
- 20 Cited from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 73.
- 21 Senator Ia. A. Solov’ev, cited in Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 3: 592–593.
- 22 Cited in Lincoln, *The Great Reforms*, 29.
- 23 Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 3: 589.
- 24 Wallace, *Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution*, 189.
- 25 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 544.
- 26 Mironov with Eklof, *Social History*, 176; and see Mironov, “Development of Literacy.”
- 27 The classic summary of his ideas is Gerschenkron, “Economic Backwardness”; the standard history of Sergei Witte’s reforms is Von Laue, *Sergei Witte*.
- 28 Allen, *Farm to Factory*, 17.
- 29 See Gregory, *Before Command*.
- 30 Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii*, 103; Moon, “Peasants and Agriculture,” 374.
- 31 Mironov, *Social History*, 109, and 57 for his table 2.1 on vital statistics.
- 32 Gregory, *Before Command*, 22–23, 25.
- 33 Mackinder, “Geographical Pivot,” 311.
- 34 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 104–105.
- 35 Gregory, *Before Command*, 44–48.
- 36 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 111–113; and see Figure 10.6 (coal and oil output); estimates of growth rates of industrial production from Falkus, *Industrialisation of Russia*, 46.
- 37 Gatrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 161.
- 38 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 122–123.
- 39 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 31.
- 40 Cited in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 31.
- 41 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 31–32.
- 42 Gatrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 158.
- 43 Holloway, “Science, Technology and Modernity,” 551.
- 44 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 69–70.
- 45 Gatrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 159–160.
- 46 Gregory, *Before Command*, 8.
- 47 Gregory, *Before Command*, 83; Sergei Witte was acutely aware of the need to reform “obsolete legislation” formulated, as he put it, “under a different economic system in Russia.” Excerpts from a Proposal of the Ministry of Finance of October 30, 1893, in Shepelev, “Commercial-Industrial Program,” 22.
- 48 Lenin, *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 472.
- 49 Lih, *Lenin*, stresses Lenin’s lifelong commitment to the heroic idea of a people’s revolution, and his lifelong optimism about the possibilities of such a revolution.
- 50 O. Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 21.

- 51 Gregory, *Before Command*, 36.
- 52 Shepelev, “Commercial-Industrial Program,” 13, and excerpts from 15.
- 53 Gregory, *Before Command*, 8.
- 54 Cited in Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 132.
- 55 Estimates from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 132–133.
- 56 Vernadsky et al., *Source Book*, 3: 640.
- 57 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 113, estimates from Falkus, *Industrialisation of Russia*.
- 58 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 130.
- 59 Cited from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 130.
- 60 See Subtelny, *Ukraine*, Ch. 13, “Growth of National Consciousness.”
- 61 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 333; Smith, *Red Nations*, 8, 13.
- 62 Cited from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 142.
- 63 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 149.
- 64 Gregory, *Before Command*, 136–137.
- 65 Gregory, *Before Command*, 55–56.
- 66 Cited from Willetts, “The Agrarian Problem,” 127.
- 67 Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge*, 16.
- 68 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 135.
- 69 Haimson, “The Problem of Social Stability.”

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[11] *1750–1900: BEYOND THE  
HEARTLANDS: INNER EURASIAN  
EMPIRES, RUSSIAN AND CHINESE*

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*INTRODUCTION*

Seen from Khuriye (modern Ulaanbaatar) or Bukhara, Kashgar or Yakutsk, Orenburg or Semipalatinsk, the history of the century and a half before 1900 was dominated not by industrialization and fossil fuels, but by the shifting balance of power between Inner Eurasia's two hegemonic powers, as the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia and started nibbling at China's traditional spheres of interest in Mongolia and the Far East.<sup>1</sup>

The area controlled by the Russian Empire increased from about 15 million sq. kilometers in 1750 to 18.2 sq. kilometers in 1858. By 1904, after Russia had conquered Transoxiana and temporarily occupied Manchuria, its empire controlled about 22 million sq. kilometers.<sup>2</sup> It now included most of Inner Eurasia, and in Poland in the far west it had overflowed into Outer Eurasia. This was the empire's maximum extent, as defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 would drive Russia out of Manchuria.<sup>3</sup>

It is striking that Russian expansion ground to a halt after filling most of Inner Eurasia. Indeed, this is one of the most powerful reasons for taking the idea of Inner Eurasia seriously as a unit of world history.<sup>4</sup> Like the Mongol Empire and the Soviet Empire, the Russian Empire overlapped those borders, but only briefly, except in eastern Europe, which was, topographically, part of the great Inner Eurasian flatlands. The Soviet Union never directly controlled as large an area as the Russian Empire in 1900, but its informal empire was much larger, as it also dominated Mongolia, Xinjiang (before 1949), and most of eastern Europe (after 1945).

This chapter will consider Russian expansion in central Inner Eurasia, in the Kazakh steppe, and Transoxiana (western Central Asia). Then it will travel east, describing Russia's consolidation of control over the neo-Europe of Siberia, and its eventual advances into the Far East, Manchuria, and even Alaska. Finally, it will discuss Mongolia and Xinjiang (eastern Central Asia),

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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regions that had fallen within China's Inner Eurasian empire but were beginning to slip from China's grip.

## *THE CHANGING NATURE OF RUSSIAN EMPIRE BUILDING*

Before the mid-nineteenth century, Russian expansion was pragmatic, non-ideological, and driven largely by commercial, military, and strategic concerns. Russian rulers and officials treated ethnic and cultural differences primarily as administrative or fiscal challenges. Loyalty and religious affiliation seemed more important than ethnicity, and Muscovite and Russian governments had generally managed to co-opt regional leaders. After the conquest of Kazan', for example, Tatar nobles had been allowed to retain their land and religious practices as long as they swore allegiance to the Tsar. Not until the eighteenth century did Russian Tsars, beginning with Peter, start demanding conversion to Orthodoxy in return for landownership.

In the nineteenth century, the ideological tone of Russian expansion changed, as the government developed a new and increasingly strident sense of imperial mission. Empire building by Russia's European rivals and new forms of nationalism gave an ideological edge to Russian expansion, and from the time of Nicholas I, Russian leaders and officials became more self-conscious about national and ethnic differences.<sup>5</sup> In his Siberian reforms of 1822, Mikhail Speranskii began the practice of describing the empire's Asian subjects as *inorodtsy*, or "aliens." After the Polish uprising of 1863, Russian governments began to actively support the "Russification" of non-Russian regions, particularly in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic provinces, where cultural and linguistic differences were smallest but, perhaps for that very reason, most threatening to Imperial cohesion.<sup>6</sup> In regions such as Central Asia, where cultural differences were greater, Russian soldiers and officials took on many of the attitudes and methods of British India. They thought of Central Asia as a conquered colony with alien traditions.<sup>7</sup>

These shifts in Imperial attitudes would shape many aspects of Russian expansion in the nineteenth century. And they would shape how the empire's non-Orthodox populations responded to Russia's growing power. Adapting to the military, political, and commercial realities of Russian power was no longer quite enough. Local communities and their leaders had to develop counter-ideologies. These usually began with the defense of religious and cultural traditions, but eventually they would plant the seeds of new counter-nationalisms that would blossom only in the twentieth century.

## *THE KAZAKH STEPPES*

The Russian Empire expanded into the Kazakh steppes using the same methods it had used in the Pontic steppes and the Urals.



**Map 11.1** Russian conquest of Central Asia. Rywkin, *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, 209.

During the eighteenth century, the three Kazakh Hordes had already accepted a loose Russian suzerainty. But it would take a long time to integrate them more fully within the Russian Empire. As in Siberia, the Pontic steppes, and the Bashkir and Kalmyk lands, expansion into the Kazakh steppes was less a matter of pitched battles than of a slow constriction of pastoralist lifestyles through fort building, trade, and the planned and unplanned migration of peasant farmers from the Russian heartlands. Kazakh leaders and communities found their pasturelands shrinking, and their political and commercial options narrowing. In the Kazakh steppes, even more than in the Pontic steppes, Russian officials whose declared aims were defensive ended up playing the more aggressive role of boa constrictor.

By the late eighteenth century, Russian fortified lines formed a huge loop that hemmed the Kazakh in on the western, northern, and eastern borders of their traditional pasturelands. Forts extended from Semipalatinsk in modern Kazakhstan (modern Semei, the site of many Soviet nuclear tests) northwards along the Irtysh river, west along the southern borders of Siberia to Omsk, and south to Uralsk in the Urals, then to Orsk and the Caspian Sea (see Map 11.1).

The destruction of the Zunghar Empire in 1750 had relieved pressure on the Great Horde's eastern borderlands. But Chinese control of Xinjiang created new frontiers and new pressures. In the early nineteenth century, the Great Horde faced a new imperial power, the Kokand khanate, which expanded north

from Tashkent. These pressures explain why so many Kazakh leaders would come to see Russia as a potential protector.

Russian encirclement threatened traditional lifeways in many insidious ways. Winter camps or *kstau* were vital for traditional pastoralists, and their loss to forts or peasant immigrants could be ruinous. Groups of 20 to 30 households (*auls*) normally settled at winter camps for four or five months, so the sites had to be well sheltered, with good water and grazing. During summer migrations, poorer or older people were often left at the *kstau* to grow grain or gather hay.<sup>8</sup> In spring most Kazakh set off to summer pastures or *dzhailau*, and *auls* broke into smaller groups, each of which might move several times during the summer. In the fall, the *auls* regathered at their winter camps. Some migrations extended over hundreds of kilometers, and required meticulous organization and the use of small advance guards.<sup>9</sup>

Shrinking pasturelands forced all but the wealthy to keep fewer horses (the animals with greatest prestige and military value), and to rely more on cattle, sheep, and goats. Sheep were particularly important because they were tough, could survive poor pastures and cold weather, and could be sold at the markets of Khiva, Bukhara, Kokand, or Orenburg. Those without enough livestock to live from herding hired their services to wealthier pastoralists, or looked for work in nearby towns or as agricultural laborers.<sup>10</sup>

Russia could tempt as well as strangle. Trade with Russia offered Kazakh khans prestige and wealth, and increased their room for maneuver. But trade was increasingly controlled by Russia and its forts, which quickly turned into steppeland commercial entrepôts. Informally, Muscovite and Tatar merchants had traded across the steppes for centuries, but formal trade, with government backing, began in 1739 when the Russian government first allowed Russian traders to export precious metals to China and Central Asia.<sup>11</sup> For much of the eighteenth century, Orenburg and Semipalatinsk were the major Russian bases for trade through the Kazakh steppe. From these and other steppe towns, huge caravans set out, each with several hundred wagons, protected by Kazakh guards.

There were annual or biannual caravans from Orenburg and Orsk to Bukhara, a journey of two to three months. On their return journeys they mainly carried cotton, as did Khivan caravans to Orenburg and Astrakhan. Three caravans left each year from Petropavlovsk to Tashkent, and two from Troitsk, on the Orenburg line, returning with fruits, rugs, silks, and craft goods.<sup>12</sup> In the eighteenth century, Tatar merchants from the Kazan region, often working in partnership with Russian merchants, gained control of the trade routes through Kazakhstan that had earlier been dominated by “Bukharans.” The Russian government supported and protected Tatar merchants, because markets in the Central Asian khanates were closed to Christians.

Russia valued the Kazakh trade because many Russian industrial goods could not compete on European markets. By 1840, even before the conquest of Transoxiana, 37 percent of Russian exports traveled through the Kazakh steppes to Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> Most steppeland trade was conducted through barter, but opportunities for arbitrage could make it very profitable. At the end of the eighteenth century it was possible to buy an iron kettle in Siberia

for the equivalent of 2.50 rubles and exchange it in the Kazakh steppes for furs worth 50 rubles on foreign or Russian markets.<sup>14</sup>

Kazakh khans faced complex and bewildering choices as they responded to Russian, Chinese, and eventually Kokandi pressure. In the early nineteenth century, the Russian government eventually abolished the traditional khanates. In 1822, it removed the khan of the Middle Horde and placed his lands under Russian administration. In 1824, it also abolished the position of khan of the Small Horde, and began to govern much of the Kazakh steppe through regional sultans, tribes, and *auls*.<sup>15</sup>

The Great Horde preserved its independence slightly longer. The Qing conquest of Zungharia created new borders that crossed ancient migration routes, forcing many in the Great Horde to choose between Russian and Chinese overlords. In the early nineteenth century, the Kokand khanate expanded north into the Tashkent steppes, forcing those on the Russian side of the border to choose either Russian or Kokandi suzerainty.<sup>16</sup> The Great Horde was finally conquered in the 1830s and 1840s after the failure of a major uprising in the Middle Horde, the Kenisary revolt. This lasted from 1837–1846 and was directed against both Russian and Kokandi encroachment. Its leader, Kenisary, noted sadly the absence of Kazakh unity.

The Russians come from the North, Kokand from the South. Having established fortifications, they trample us, from whom we have both this squeezing and this crowding, We, the children of the Kazakhs, What would we be if we had unity? Until now we have been split because we have no unity.<sup>17</sup>

Kenisary was the grandson of Khan Ablai of the Middle Horde, who had sought Chinese protection in the late eighteenth century. Today, Kenisary is regarded as the first great Kazakh nationalist. After defeating the Kenisary revolt, Russia built new fortified lines to the east of the Kazakh steppes and along the Syr Darya. These would eventually provide the launchpad for Russia's invasion of Transoxiana after 1865.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire had absorbed the Kazakh steppes militarily and administratively. Their cultural integration into the empire began with the emergence of a Russified Kazakh elite, mostly consisting of the children of Kazakh nobles educated in Russian schools. The absence of madrasas and established traditions of Islamic learning in the steppes made it easier for the Kazakh elite than those of Transoxiana to accept secular education.<sup>18</sup> This was the milieu from which early Kazakh nationalists such as Choqan Valikhanov would appear. Valikhanov was the first to write down the great Kyrgyz epic poem *Manas*, which he described as the *Iliad* of the Central Asian steppes.

The ecological incorporation of the Kazakh steppes would largely be the work of peasant migrants, who followed Russia's soldiers and fort builders, attracted by military protection and the prospect of cheap, unfarmed land. The government made some attempts to limit migration, but many officials saw migration as a way of coping with growing land hunger in the heartlands. From the 1870s, the government began to encourage migration, and by 1914

about half the population of Kazakhstan and Semirechie had come from Russia, mostly illegally.<sup>19</sup> The government supported colonization by planting settlements along post roads, while private entrepreneurs sent out *khodoks* or land scouts who leased plots from local Kazakhs and made them available to settlers. Settlers built farmsteads consisting mostly of earthen huts. Some paid local Kazakh for their land, and even worked farmland for them. Settler populations increased, and villages and small townships began to appear, until eventually the settlers were numerous and powerful enough to ask Russian officials for legal title to the lands they had once leased. The steppes were slipping from the grasp of Kazakh pastoralists.<sup>20</sup>

Despite government restrictions on migration, land hunger in Russia's central provinces and the 1890–1891 famine ensured that illegal settlement would continue. In Akmolinsk *oblast'* in 1890, 9,000 would-be settlers arrived, doubling the number of settlers already in the region. A contemporary reported that:

settlers literally inundated all the Cossack and peasant settlements. Whole crowds of them roamed aimlessly about, spending their last means, seeking any kind of work ... in such numbers that the situation became impossible. Lured by the letters of relatives about the abundance of the steppe lands, as if they were freely given out for settlement, and deceived in their bright hopes, ... the spirits of the newly arrived naturally fall, and their helplessness makes a depressing sight.<sup>21</sup>

After the creation of the Resettlement Administration in 1896, the government supported colonization more actively, particularly near the Trans-Siberian railroad. Officials envisaged huge irrigation projects in the steppes that would support large populations of both Russians and Kazakhs, and create rich agricultural surpluses.<sup>22</sup> Similar schemes would be introduced 60 years later under the Soviet Virgin Lands program.

Peasant migrations undermined traditional lifeways. Settler villages often cut traditional migration routes, or encroached on traditional winter camp sites, so many pastoralists had to find new niches in a rapidly changing world.

Some nomads cut hay for winter fodder and built winter shelters for a portion of their animals. Some began to spend their winters in dwellings of wood, sod, or mud, depending on the house styles of their nearest neighbors, or to put up a clay wall around their encampment of yurts. Deprived of their richest pastures, many Kazaks were forced to give up pastoralism partially or completely. Some who lived near lakes or rivers took up fishing. ... Some settled at the edge of Russian colonies and eventually became a part of the settled community. Others hired out as mine workers or as agricultural laborers at harvest time. ... At the Spassky mines, many of the Kazak employees were young men who worked only long enough to earn a bride price, then returned to the *aul*.<sup>23</sup>

As more Kazakhs took up farming, the government raised its estimates of the amount of “free” land available for settlement. A commission dispatched

in 1895 and headed by the statistician F. A. Shcherbina concluded that the newly established farmlands were:

a historically necessary symbol of change from one form of economy to another. ... Replacing the nomad with his eternally wandering herds there has arisen here a half-settled form of life and occupation with the land. And where the plow has cut into the bosom of the earth pastoralism has already started to break up and an agricultural way of life has begun.<sup>24</sup>

Nomadic lifeways that had survived for thousands of years were beginning to vanish.

## *TRANSOXIANA*

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the only major region of central Inner Eurasia beyond Russia's direct control was Transoxiana. Here, in contrast to the steppes, there were powerful regional polities with their own armies, so conquest took the form of major military campaigns.

## THE KHANATES

In the late eighteenth century, Transoxiana was still ruled by the three khanates that had emerged in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Bukhara, the richest and most populous, had about 3 million people; Khiva, the most compact, had about half a million; and Kokand had a population of about 1.5 million.<sup>25</sup>

The khanates ruled populations that were extraordinarily diverse, and this made it impossible to create a strong sense of ethnic cohesion even at the regional level.<sup>26</sup> The khanates included pastoralists and farmers, Turkic and Persian speakers, tribes that identified as Turkmen or Uzbek or Tajik or Kyrgyz, and large slave populations, mostly of Persian or Russian origin. Most slaves worked in agriculture, though some rose high in the administration of the khanates. Those without a clear role or place in this patchwork world were usually poor. Many herded a few livestock, but not enough to make a living. In the middle of the nineteenth century, perhaps a quarter of Bukhara's population was indigent.<sup>27</sup>

But though many moved between the cities and the steppes, the most fundamental difference was still between the oases and the steppes, between farmers and pastoralists. The oases had stronger legal and educational traditions, well-educated clergy, wealthy merchants, and complex, if ramshackle, state structures. Between the cities, there were still large nomadic populations, kinship trumped bureaucracy, and religious traditions were still shamanic in their rituals and theology.<sup>28</sup>

Even in the steppes there was great political and cultural diversity. The Kazakh had khans, though their authority was limited, even in times of war. The Kyrgyz, who had been driven south by the Oirat in the seventeenth century



and nomadized in eastern Transoxiana, the Kashgar region, and Semirechie, did not normally have overall khans, but could mobilize rapidly for war or raiding under temporary leaders known in the nineteenth century as *manap*. To allow for rapid mobilization, many Kyrgyz nomadized in large tribal groups, whose campsites were huge, sometimes stretching over 20 kilometers along rivers or mountain ridges. They often included several hundred families under the authority of a local leader or “*beg*,” who could form them into an army in just a few hours.<sup>29</sup> In Turkmenistan, social structures were exceptionally egalitarian, and overall leaders, khans or *serdars*, were chosen only during major wars.

Transoxiana’s rulers enjoyed only thin reserves of loyalty and legitimacy as they juggled these centrifugal forces. This meant that the power and wealth of individual rulers varied greatly, and depended to an exceptional degree on their personal skills. Chinggisid descent still mattered in both the cities and the steppes, but so, too, did a reputation for justice and Islamic piety.<sup>30</sup> But the main challenge for the region’s khans and emirs was to maintain control over both subordinate cities and regional steppe leaders and their armies. This was a messy, weak, and unstable version of the traditional *smychka*.

Methods of rule had changed little since the Timurid era.<sup>31</sup> In the khanate of Bukhara, for example, the main provinces (*vilayets*) were ruled by governors known as *hakim* or *beg*, but military power depended on the support of tribal leaders. Below the *vilayet* was the *tumen*, and below that, the *kent*, the township or village. In the villages the dominant figures were the *aksakals* or elders. The primary function of all levels of government was the collection of taxes, most of which were levied on commerce or on land. But as few officials received salaries, there was an extra level of taxes, levied and assessed informally to pay the large and growing bureaucracy. Land taxes were crucial because, despite the importance of trade to the region’s cities, irrigation agriculture still generated most of the region’s wealth and food. Though some cotton and silk were grown, most crops were produced for subsistence or local trade. They included wheat, rice, and other grains, as well as garden produce such as melons and orchard fruits.<sup>32</sup>

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, all three khanates undertook modest reforms, mostly to improve their armies. Khiva and Kokand began to form standing infantry armies equipped with some modern weaponry, and Bukhara would begin forming its own standing armies under Emir Nasrallah from the 1820s.<sup>33</sup> But tribal armies retained their importance in the military affairs and politics of all the khanates.

Late in the eighteenth century, the Bukharan and Khorezmian khanates both acquired new dynasties of Uzbek origin. In Bukhara, the Mangit dynasty, founded in 1753, ruled effectively from the accession of Emir Shah Murad (1785–1800). Shah Murad was a son-in-law of the last khan and a non-Chinggisid. He ruled, therefore, as an “emir,” which forced him and his successors into closer dependence on Islam. Shah Murad belonged to the Naqshbandiyya, and assumed the Arab title of *amir al-mu’minin*, the traditional title of the caliphs.<sup>34</sup> Such titles provided an important counter-balance to the immense spiritual authority of the Bukharan ulama, which was magnified by

their control of *waqf* foundations and their immunity from most taxes.<sup>35</sup> The Bukharan emirate was known to its own people as Mawarannahr, Turan, or simply Buhara.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1830s, Emir Nasrallah (r. 1827–1860) enhanced the military power of the emirate by recruiting a standing army from farmers, townspeople, and Iranian or Kalmyk slaves.<sup>37</sup> His forceful rule earned him the epithet of “the Butcher Emir” among his own subjects, and equal notoriety among the British for his execution of two British officers.<sup>38</sup> But even Nasrallah failed to control outlying provinces. It took him 25 years to control Timur’s homeland of Shahr-i-Sabz, and the more mountainous regions in eastern Bukhara were ruled by local “*beks*,” who obeyed the emirs of Bukhara in name alone.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Bukhara was more successful than either of the two other Central Asian khanates in building centralized military and political structures.

In Khorezm/Khiva, the Qongrat dynasty was founded in 1804 by Ertüzür Inaq, who assumed the title of khan despite not being a Chinggisid. Ertüzür’s younger brother and successor, Muhammad Rahim (1806–1825), rebuilt the region’s irrigation system, asserted his authority over neighboring Uzbek tribes, and launched booty raids against Turkmen tribes to the east and south, against Kazakh tribes to the north, and even against Persia and Bukhara.<sup>40</sup> In 1839, Khiva defeated a Russian military expedition to the region. But the khan’s power depended on his ability to negotiate with the pastoralist leaders who provided most of his troops. This meant that, like the princes of fourteenth-century Muscovy, he could never be sure which troops would turn up for military campaigns, or which side they would fight on.<sup>41</sup>

In the Fergana valley, one of the most densely populated regions of Central Asia, a revived Kokandi khanate emerged in 1798, under the Ming dynasty, which had ruled in the region since the early eighteenth century. Kokand benefited most from the Qing defeat of the Zunghar Empire, which removed a dangerous neighbor and enriched Kokandi traders by expanding trade with the Tarim basin and China. In 1800 Kokand’s ruler, Alim (1798–1810), assumed the title of khan, despite not being a Chinggisid.<sup>42</sup> Buoyed by trade and military reforms, extensive investment in new irrigation systems and the production of cotton and silk, a series of skillful rulers supported expansion to the north towards Tashkent and the Kyrgyz steppes, southwards towards Badakshan, and eastwards into the Tarim basin. Alim’s predecessor, Narbota Biy (c.1770–1798), had begun building forts in Kyrgyz lands, and used them to tax local tribes, to control migration and trade routes, and to manage lucrative trades in slaves and opium.<sup>43</sup> Under Alim’s rule and that of his son and grandson, Kokand conquered Tashkent and regions as far east as Bishkek, which it founded as a fort in 1825. Under Madali Khan (1822–1842), Kokand reached its largest extent and in 1826, an agreement with China gave Kokand partial suzerainty over Kashgaria (see below, p. 301).

However, military success was not matched by the building of durable political structures. Most of Kokand’s troops were tribal irregulars. Even in the 1860s the khan directly controlled no more than 10,000 regular troops. Kokand was weakened by tribal rivalries between the sedentary and largely Iranian populations of Fergana, and the Uzbek Kipchaks of the north.<sup>44</sup> And

the dynasty paid a price for its uncertain legitimacy, which encouraged murderous contests for the throne. A series of weak rulers failed to manage the complex alliance systems that had allowed Kokand to expand earlier in the century, and in its final years regional leaders made and unmade khans with a regularity reminiscent of the Golden Horde's "Great Troubles" in the fourteenth century. From the 1840s, Kokand fell increasingly under the control of the powerful and energetic Bukharan Emir Nasrallah.

Though the khanates were still independent in the middle of the nineteenth century, the ominous advance through the Kazakh steppes of Russia's wall of forts made their future look increasingly uncertain. Russian economic influence was also increasing. Since the late eighteenth century, the khanates had provided just enough stability to allow a modest revival of trade, which increased Transoxiana's wealth and attracted Russian commercial interest.<sup>45</sup> Bukhara and Kokand concentrated on the China trade, importing silk, tea, and porcelains in return for horses and livestock, as well as opium and Russian furs. The khanates also exported large numbers of horses and livestock to Afghanistan and on to India, trades that explain the size and significance of the Indian commercial diaspora in Bukhara, Kokand, and also in Xinjiang. And the khanates remained at the heart of the flourishing Inner Eurasian slave trade, particularly Khiva, where Turkmen slave raiders sold captives taken mainly from Persian villages or the mountain villages of the Pamirs. In 1873, there were about 100,000 slaves in Khiva, Bukhara, and Turkmenistan.<sup>46</sup>

Central Asian trade with Russia grew briskly in the early nineteenth century. Arminius Vambery reported in 1863 that "there is no house, and even no tent, in all Central Asia, where there is not some article of Russian manufacture."<sup>47</sup> Central Asian caravans carried raw cotton, cotton cloth, silks, dyes, and fruit to Russia's fortified entrepôts in the steppes, and Central Asian cotton became particularly important for Russia's first steam-powered textile factories in the 1830s and 1840s. There was a colony of Bukharan traders in Orenburg in the early nineteenth century, and Bukharans regularly frequented the great Nizhnii Novgorod markets.

## THE CONQUEST OF TRANSOXIANA

By the 1860s, Russia was well prepared to conquer Transoxiana. It controlled the Kazakh steppes, its forts reached to the northern edges of Transoxiana, and its armies were being modernized after the disaster of the Crimean War. But in the 1850s and early 1860s, Russia was preoccupied with the Crimean War (1853–1856), and its brutal campaigns of conquest in the Caucasus. These ended with the capture of Shaikh Shamil in 1859, and the conquest of Circassia in 1864. But the Russian government remained unsure of the merits of a military conquest of Transoxiana after the bloody and expensive campaigns in the Caucasus. Though keen to defend the Kazakh steppes, to protect the lucrative trades with Central Asia, India, and China, and to release Russian captives in Transoxiana, Russian officials did not want conflict with Britain in Afghanistan, and were wary of the costs of conquering and administering such a vast and densely populated region.

The government was also ill-informed about Transoxiana. Some of that ignorance was dispelled by the first major diplomatic and trade mission to the emirates of Khiva and Bukhara in 1858. This was led by Colonel N. P. Ignatev, formerly the Russian military agent in London. Ignatev's mission was to increase trade with the emirates, to lower the duties paid by Russian traders, and to ensure that the emirates did not fall under British influence. Though the mission concluded trade agreements, its most important result may have been, in Ignatev's words, to disperse "the fog concealing the khanate from the Russian government."<sup>48</sup> Russian officials became more aware of the region's resources (particularly cotton, which had been an important part of the region's economy since ancient times) and its commercial possibilities. Popular support for advancing into Central Asia was encouraged by journalistic accounts of the presence of Russian slaves, many of them peasant migrants to the Kazakh steppes. Interest in Central Asia was also heightened by a growing sense of Russia's imperial mission.

The government's uncertainty about how to deal with Transoxiana is captured well in an 1864 memorandum by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Gorchakov, written just before Russian troops entered Transoxiana:

The situation of Russia in Middle Asia is that of all civilized states which come into contact with semi-savage and itinerant ethnic groups without a structured social organization. In such a case the interest in the security of one's borders and in trade relations always makes it imperative that the civilized state should have a certain authority over its neighbours, who as a result of their wild and impetuous customs are very disconcerting. Initially it is a matter of containing their attacks and raids. In order to stop them, one is usually compelled to subjugate the adjoining ethnic groups more or less directly. Once this has been achieved, their manners become less unruly, though they in turn are now subjected to attacks by more distant tribes. The state is duty-bound to protect them against such raids, and punish the others for their deeds. From this springs the necessity of further protracted periodic expeditions against an enemy who, on account of his social order, cannot be caught ... For this reason the state has to decide between two alternatives. Either it must give up this unceasing work and surrender its borders to continual disorder ... or it must penetrate further and further into the wild lands ... This has been the fate of all states which have come up against this kind of situation. The United States in America, France in Africa, Holland in its colonies, Britain in eastern India – all were drawn less by ambition and more by necessity along this path forwards on which it is very difficult to stop once one has started.<sup>49</sup>

Here, expressed in nineteenth-century diplomatic language, were all the familiar dilemmas of empire building in unfamiliar lands. Though dangerous and costly, expansion often seemed necessary to defend earlier conquests. Besides, in an age of imperialism, *not* to expand when opportunities appeared could be seen as a sign of weakness, particularly if there was a danger of British forces expanding into Central Asia from Afghanistan. Finally, the growing imbalance in the military, economic, and political power of the Russian Empire and Central Asia made conquest seem easier, cheaper, and less risky than ever before. (See Map 11.1.)

Russia was drawn into Transoxiana through the lands recently conquered by Kokand. Between 1847 and 1854, Russia built two new lines of forts, one from the Aral Sea along the Syr Darya, the other southward from Semipalatinsk. In 1854, Russia built a fort at Vernoe (modern Almaty). With the formal goal of protecting Kyrgyz tribes on the northern borders of Kokandi territory, Russian forces now entered territory claimed by Kokand. In 1853, General V. A. Perovskii advanced 450 miles up the Syr Darya and captured the fort of Ak-Mechet, giving Russia control of much of the Syr Darya. Soon, Russian ships were sailing the Syr Darya.

The Kokandi-controlled city of Tashkent now offered an extremely tempting target. It was the richest and largest city in the region, with a population of 100,000 and almost 150 separate *mahallas*. It was also a gateway to trade with China and Transoxiana.<sup>50</sup> As a Russian general wrote in 1861, “with Tashkent in our hands we shall not only dominate completely the Kokand khanate but we shall strengthen our influence on Bukhara which will greatly increase our trade with those countries and particularly with the populous Chinese towns of Kashgar and Yarkand.”<sup>51</sup>

In the middle of 1864, in response to Kokandi attacks, Russian forces advanced from Vernoe in the north-east under Colonel Cherniaev to join up with forces advancing eastwards from the Syr Darya line. The two detachments attacked Tashkent and, though greatly outnumbered, proved superior in discipline, training, and equipment. In June 1865, in disregard of orders, Cherniaev attacked Tashkent for a second time with just under 2,000 men and took the city. Russian casualties were extremely light, and the ancient muskets and cannons of the defenders could do little against the disciplined volleys and modern artillery of Russian units.<sup>52</sup> Tsar Alexander II described the conquest of Tashkent as “a glorious affair,” and rewarded Cherniaev’s disobedience by granting him a sword set with diamonds, and giving decorations and extra pay to his officers and troops.<sup>53</sup>

Gorchakov opposed further advances. Cherniaev argued for outright annexation. Others proposed creating protectorates over the khanates. But the next move was decided by events on the ground. In 1866, under pressure from Muslim clergy, Emir Muzaffar of Bukhara (r. 1860–1885) reluctantly declared war on Russia. Within months, his armies had been defeated. In 1868, an imposed treaty, consciously modeled on British treaties with Indian principalities, turned Bukhara into a Russian protectorate. In an 1873 revision of the treaty, the emir lost control over Bukhara’s foreign policy and had to acknowledge himself “the obedient servant of the Emperor of All the Russias.”<sup>54</sup>

In 1867, the Russian government created a Turkestan Governor-Generalship under the command of K. P. von Kaufman (1818–1882). It included the Samarkand region, which was severed from the Bukharan emirate under the 1868 treaty. (See Figure 11.1.) Kaufman reported directly to the emperor, and governed the region until 1881. In the areas under his control, Kaufman began creating a governmental system which, like British rule in India and Chinese rule in Xinjiang, left most local authority to local Central Asian officials.



**Figure 11.1** Vasilii Vasilievich Vereshchagin, *They Triumph*, 1872, shows Samarkand’s central square, the Registan, after a battle during the Russian conquest of Central Asia. Vereshchagin traveled in Central Asia during the years of Russia’s conquest of the region. This depicts the impaled heads of Russian troops in what was still part of the Bukharan emirate. It is an imperialist and orientalist vision, but was painted by an artist who did know the region. Courtesy of Tretyakov Gallery.

Conflicts with Khiva provoked Russian attacks from both Tashkent and the Caspian region. In 1873 Khiva, too, became a Russian protectorate, and some of its territory was hived off to the Turkestan Governor-Generalship. After trying to flee, the emir of Khiva was forcibly restored to power, and required to sign a treaty with Russia and abolish slavery. Kokand was conquered outright in 1875, after its forces attacked Russian troops. The following year, Kaufman stormed Andijan and abolished the Kokand khanate.

Wary of the financial and administrative costs of direct rule, and of its implications for relations with China and Britain, the government left the cut-down Bukharan and Khivan emirates as formally independent polities. They would retain formal independence until the collapse of Russia itself in 1917, but both lost territory, and their rulers were supervised by resident Russian “political agents.”

In practice, Russian conquest allowed the emirs of Bukhara to consolidate their power, as the presence of Russian troops enhanced their power in relation to regional tribal chiefs and to the Muslim clergy. Emir Abd al-Ahad

(r. 1885–1910) presented himself to his subjects as the last defender of traditional Islam against the Russian invader. To the Russians he presented himself as a bastion of stability in a dangerous and hostile environment. Under Russian protection, Bukhara's last emirs accumulated great wealth. When the last emir, Alim Khan (r. 1910–1920), sought British help to flee abroad, he promised to bring assets worth £35 million.<sup>55</sup>

The conquest of Turkmenistan proved more difficult because here, as in parts of the northern Caucasus, there was no single polity to conquer or control.<sup>56</sup> In 1869 and 1873, Russian forces established bases on Turkmen territory on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, at Krasnovodsk and Mangashlyk. In 1879, Turkmen fighters, mostly of the Tekke tribe, defeated Russian troops at the desert fortress of Geok-Tepe, near modern Ashkhabad. They killed some 200 Russian troops in Russia's most serious military defeat in Central Asia. Two years later, troops from Russia's Caucasus command conquered most of modern Turkmenistan. General Skobelev conquered Geok-Tepe in January 1881, and massacred most of the Turkmen forces, insisting that "the duration of peace is in direct proportion to the slaughter you inflict upon the enemy. The harder you hit them, the longer they remain quiet."<sup>57</sup> The capture of Merv, in 1884, completed the conquest of Turkmenistan. After negotiating a border between Russian Central Asia and British-controlled Afghanistan in 1887, Russia would advance no further south until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

At relatively little cost, the Russian Empire had conquered an area the size of western Europe, with a population of 9 million people, rich agricultural and commercial resources, and historical and religious traditions older than its own. Russian patriots celebrated. After Skobelev's conquest of Geok-Tepe in 1881, Dostoyevsky wrote: "In the whole of Asia, Skobelev's victory will resound, to its farthest borders ... [demonstrating] the invincibility of the white tsar."<sup>58</sup>

## RUSSIAN RULE IN TRANSOXIANA

In Transoxiana, Russia established a system of imperial rule similar to that of British India, with strong central control but limited political or cultural influence at the local level. The military dominated the administrative and judicial structures of colonial rule. The Governor-Generals and most of their subordinates were military officers so that, until 1917, Russian administration retained the quality of an occupying army. In 1912, the future minister, A. V. Krivoshein, wrote:

When one has seen the universal predominance of the natives in Turkestan, one cannot but feel that this is still a Russian military camp, a temporary halting place during the victorious march of Russia into Central Asia.<sup>59</sup>

Few Russians could be found in the villages or in the *mahallas* of the towns and cities, and Muslim judges, village elders or *aksakals*, and fiscal officials continued to be elected in traditional ways.<sup>60</sup> In the khanates, legal and governmental traditions survived as well. In Khiva, judicial torture was not

officially abolished until 1888. Even modernizing reforms such as the abolition of slavery could have unexpected results. In Turkmenistan, it removed an important source of income and the labor of Turkmen women often replaced that of agricultural slaves. The end of slave raiding left many males without a traditional career, and in 1881, soon after the battle of Geok-Tepe, a foreign traveler noted that many men had turned in despair to alcohol and opium.<sup>61</sup>

With its large populations and ancient cultural traditions, Central Asia would never become as Russified as other conquered regions, even Muslim regions such as Kazan' or Crimea. It is symptomatic that, while legally Central Asians were classified as *inorodtsy*, like other indigenous populations of the empire, Russian officials in the region described them as *tuzemtsy*, or "locals."<sup>62</sup> Cultural differences between colonizers and colonized remained stark, as in much of the Caucasus. While some Central Asian leaders and merchants moved between both worlds, educating their children in both Russian and Muslim schools, most Central Asians, or "Sarts" as the Russians called them, were barely touched by Russian culture, and continued to seek education within the traditional *maktabs* and madrasas. In Transoxiana, as in much of the Caucasus, Islam provided a sense of cultural cohesion, and of difference from the imperial heartland and its culture. Ferghana, which would become the center of the Basmachi resistance movement in the 1920s, was particularly important in this regard. Here, anti-Russian sentiment, often supported by local mullahs or Sufis, would provoke many small uprisings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>63</sup>

Russia's administrative system preserved regional traditions by ignoring them. This allowed the survival of the traditional ulama, of many madrasas, and of the traditional Muslim courts overseen by elected *qazis*. Indeed, Central Asia's religious elites survived the conquest better than its political or tribal elites. In any case, Russia's colonial administration was chronically short of cash, so Russian Turkestan was seriously under-governed. Syr Darya province, with a population of almost 1.5 million in 1897, was managed by just 19 officials when first created in 1867. Forty years later, in 1908, Ferghana province's population of 2 million was managed by 43 officials, of which only two were translators.<sup>64</sup>

Russia's impact was greater in the towns. Russian towns grew up around army garrisons, often alongside ancient Central Asian towns. They attracted Russian traders, railway workers, and officials, and also a considerable number of illegal Russian migrants. The contrast between the traditional city, with its warren of streets and houses built around courtyards with no exterior windows, and Russian quarters built according to geometric plans along wide avenues, is still apparent today in cities such as Samarkand, Tashkent, or Bukhara. In this as in other things, Kaufman set a precedent with his plans for building a European city at Tashkent. Lord Curzon, who visited the city in 1889, found that the worlds of Russians and natives were even more distinct than in British Indian towns. By 1910, the Russian city of Tashkent occupied as large an area as the native city, though it had just a quarter of the population. Stephen Graham, who visited in 1914, found that the military still set the tone of the Russian

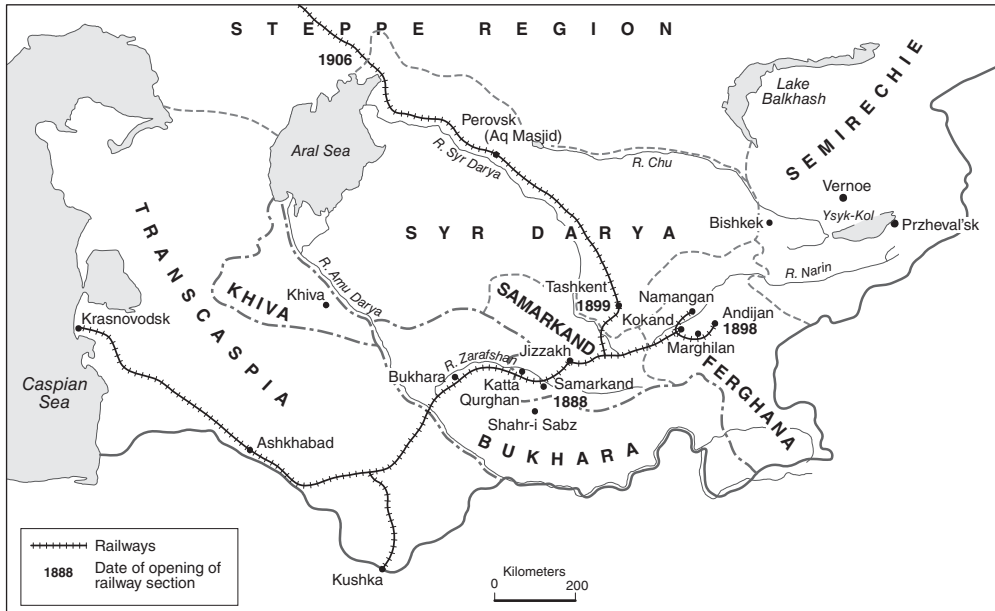


city. But he also noticed a superficial Europeanization of some of the city's local population.

There are six cinema shows at Tashkent, two theatres, an open-air theatre, a skating rink, and many small diversions. The native turns up in the cinema, and there are generally long lines of turbaned figures in the front of the theatre. At the real theatres it is necessarily those who know Russian who take the seats. At the open-air theatre they play *The Taming of the Shrew*, at the Coliseum the *Doll's House* and Artsibasheff's *Jealousy*.<sup>65</sup>

Eventually, there emerged a small, Russified, Central Asian intelligentsia, whose members were interested in modernization, in modern education, and in modern forms of nationalism. Tatar intellectuals from the Volga and Crimean regions took the lead in attempts to forge new Turkic and Islamic national or cultural identities.<sup>66</sup> Kazan' had long been a commercial and intellectual intermediary between Russia and Central Asia, but its Muslim intellectuals also felt strong links to Bukhara, as an ancient center of Islamic learning. Many Turkic intellectuals were inspired by the writings of a Crimean Tatar, Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (1851–1914). In his newspaper, *Terjiman* ("The Translator," first published in 1883), Gasprinskii argued for modern forms of education, including science and history as well as modern languages. He also argued for a common Turkic language, and the emancipation of women. Gasprinskii himself had traveled widely, living for a time in Moscow, where he was a student in a military academy, and in Paris, where he worked for a time as Turgenev's secretary. He introduced the first "new method" school in Crimea in 1884, and by 1900 such schools were common in Crimea and among Russia's Tatar population.<sup>67</sup> The idea of a new form of education that would teach literacy and combine religious and secular education so as to prepare young Muslim students for the modern world came to be known as the "new method" education (*usul-i jadid*), or "Jadidism." Jadidism would put educational reform at the heart of discussions about reform in the Muslim societies of Inner Eurasia. Gasprinskii himself saw the *maktabs* and madrasas of Bukhara as a symbol of all that was worst about Islamic conservatism.<sup>68</sup>

Attempts to forge a new pan-Turkic national identity within the Russian Empire would not succeed, partly because of splits between secular nationalists and those committed to traditional Islam, and partly because the Turkic languages of the empire had moved too far apart. In Tashkent, most Tatars (often described as "Nogais" by Russian officials) were so Russianized that they lived separately from other Central Asians, sent their children to Russian schools, and even dressed differently. Mehmed Zahir Bigiev, a Tatar who traveled in Central Asia in 1893, was shocked by the "complete ignorance of the world" of the famous madrasas he visited in Bukhara and Samarkand.<sup>69</sup> But whether Tatar or Central Asian, the emerging intelligentsia was too small to have much impact on the 95 percent of the population who remained illiterate. As a result, Central Asia's first modern revolutionary movements would be dominated by Russian immigrants.<sup>70</sup>



**Map 11.2** Central Asia after Russian conquest. Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, xxiii, showing railways. Reproduced with permission of University of California Press.

Russia ruled Central Asia not just through its armies, but also with modern technologies, of which the railway and telegraph were the most important. Here, as elsewhere in Inner Eurasia, vast distances meant that cheap and efficient ways of moving people, troops, goods, and ideas could prove transformative. (See Map 11.2.)

By 1869, there was already a telegraph line between Russia and Central Asia. Printing arrived with the Russians but took off after the introduction of lithographic printing in 1883.<sup>71</sup> Print was transformative in a society in which important knowledge had been disseminated primarily by word of mouth, from teacher to student. Traditional sharia law depended on the interpretation of printed texts by jurists so, in contrast to western legal traditions, no one expected printed laws to be self-explanatory. That is why increased reliance on printed texts was such a profound threat to older ways of thinking and older forms of knowledge. As Adeeb Khalid puts it, “Unlike the decades’ worth of learning in the madrasa that provided entrée to the cultural elite, access to the new public space required only basic literacy. ... In the new public [space], the older cultural elite was increasingly marginalized.”<sup>72</sup>

Railway building transformed military and economic relations. In 1880, a military railway line was built from the Caspian Sea to Ashkhabad. By 1888 it reached Samarkand, and by 1900 it had reached Tashkent. The railway replaced older routes to Russia that used desert caravans to Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea, steamers to Baku or Astrakhan and train or river steamers to Moscow. Railways (and protective tariffs) killed off the traditional caravan

trade to Russia and India. Soon it was cheaper and quicker to send goods by rail to Odessa and then by sea to Bombay than by caravan through Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup> Railways also killed off many traditional urban crafts by bringing industrially produced Russian goods. The opening of the Orenburg–Tashkent Railroad in 1906 accelerated Transoxiana’s economic incorporation within the empire. The Turksib railway, which would not be completed until 1930, was begun just before 1914, to ease the transport of cheap grain from Semirechie and western Siberia.

Cotton proved the most profitable of local crops, because it provided cheap raw materials for the empire’s multiplying textile factories in Russia and Poland. Cotton was still produced by numerous small farmers, so it helped create a large and prosperous new class of Central Asian middlemen and merchants.<sup>74</sup> Cotton production grew rapidly after the introduction of American varieties of cotton, because traditional Central Asian cottons were difficult to work and could be used only for inferior textiles. In 1884, Kaufman encouraged plantings of American varieties of long-fiber cotton; by 1888, large areas were devoted to American varieties, mainly in the Tashkent and Ferghana regions; and by the early twentieth century, American cotton had displaced local varieties in much of Central Asia. Cotton exports were carried at first on large camel caravans, but eventually by rail. They soon began to attract Russian commercial investment.<sup>75</sup> Railways cheapened the export of cotton and fruit to Russia, and allowed the import of Russian grains to replace subsistence crops such as wheat, rice, alfalfa, and sorghum that had been displaced by cotton. Central Asia also offered a useful protected market for Russian manufactured goods, including iron and steel, which struggled to compete on international markets.<sup>76</sup>

However, cotton is a thirsty and demanding crop, and as its commercial importance grew, particularly for Russia, it began to take up more and more land and use more and more water, until it began to displace subsistence crops, warping the entire Central Asian economy in the interests of the empire. As Russia’s Minister of Agriculture put it in 1912:

Every extra *pod* of Turkestani wheat [provides] competition for Russian and Siberian wheat; every extra *pod* of Turkestani cotton [presents] competition to American cotton. Therefore, it is better to give the region imported, even though expensive, bread, [and thus] to free irrigated land in the region for cotton.<sup>77</sup>

In 1885 about 14 percent of cultivated land in Ferghana was devoted to cotton. By 1915, cotton accounted for 40 percent of cultivated land in Ferghana, and perhaps half of all agricultural production in Russian Central Asia.<sup>78</sup> Transoxiana, which had long been self-sufficient in grain and rice, now had to import both crops.

Cotton production supported a growing merchant class, and the associated economic boom drove urbanization. Tashkent’s population grew from *c.*75,000 in 1870 to almost 250,000 in 1911. By 1911, the population of Samarkand was almost 90,000, while Kokand, in the heart of the cotton-growing region, had grown to over 110,000.<sup>79</sup> Cotton drove many rural producers into debt. In

spring, when most peasants were short of cash, cotton traders or *tarazudars* offered loans in cash and kind (including manufactured goods or tea, soap, and paraffin) in return for a commitment to produce a fixed amount of cotton at prices determined in advance by the traders.<sup>80</sup> Like Chinese moneylenders in Mongolia, the cotton traders were in a strong position because of their links to the imperial power, though Russian officials in the region tried hard to limit indebtedness, rightly fearing it would encourage anti-Russian feeling.

The incorporation of Central Asia's economy into the Russian mobilizational system could not have taken place without a transformation in landownership as profound as the one that Russia had undergone in 1861. In 1886, tenants of *waqf* lands were declared hereditary owners of the land they used, and in 1913 all tenants were given ownership of their lands.<sup>81</sup> Combined with the introduction of local elections, these changes destroyed the authority of traditional tribal elites, and may have helped reconcile much of the local population to the new Russian authorities. But, like cotton production, they also forced traditional farmers into market relations, exposed them to debt and bankruptcy, and allowed a new concentration of landholding in the hands of new commercial elites. Cotton growing forced more and more peasants to buy their food, often at inflated prices. Increasing numbers of peasants were transformed into day-laborers, or sharecroppers, many of whom had to surrender up to 80 percent of their harvest.<sup>82</sup>

By 1900, though culturally very different from the rest of Russia, Transoxiana had been successfully incorporated into the Russian imperial mobilizational machine. The region's economic and political fate was determined increasingly by decisions taken in the Russian heartland. Yet many aspects of its traditional culture would be protected, unwittingly, by a colonial regime that was underfunded, and more interested in cotton than in cultural change.

## *RUSSIA IN SIBERIA AND THE FAR EAST*

By 1700, there were probably 300,000 Russians in Siberia; by 1800 there were 900,000. That was probably three or four times the number of indigenous Siberians. By 1850 there were 2.7 million Russians and by 1911 almost 8 million. By 1914 the population of Siberia had reached 10 million, as a result of a mass migration as significant in its scale and impact as that of European migrations to the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>83</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century indigenous Siberians accounted for less than 20 percent of Siberia's population and by 1911 for less than 10 percent. Most Russian settlers lived in western Siberia. In the 1760s, a quarter of all Russians lived east of the Yenisei; in 1900, only about one fifth lived in eastern Siberia.<sup>84</sup>

## *SIBERIA AND THE FAR EAST BEFORE 1850*

In the mid-eighteenth century, Siberia, like the neo-Europes of North and South America, consisted of expanding regions of European settlement and outlying regions in which indigenous populations came under increasing

demographic, fiscal, military, and even epidemiological pressures that undermined traditional lifeways.

The Russian government mobilized resources, above all furs, through a network of forts established at strategic points along Siberia's major rivers, mostly in the forested southern half of Siberia. Settled by Cossacks, government officials, merchants, exiles, and increasing numbers of peasant immigrants from Russia, the forts turned into small towns and even cities, from which officials, soldiers, and merchants set off to control the more remote regions of the north and far east. Indigenous communities felt increasing pressure through demands for tributes (*iasak*), the taking of hostages, the occupation of traditional hunting grounds, new diseases, attempts at religious conversion, and occasionally military attacks.

Given Siberia's vast size, efficient communications between forts and towns were the key to mobilizing its resources. Rivers were Siberia's first roads. But from the 1740s, a post-horse system linked forts and towns along the northern edge of the Kazakh steppes. But it was slow. In 1787, a British traveler took two and a half months to travel from St. Petersburg to Irkutsk. Beginning in 1763, Russia built a road from Tiumen' to Krasnoyarsk, known as the Siberian "*trakt*." Though best known as the route by which convicts traveled to Siberia, the *trakt* also encouraged immigration and trade. Caravans and sledges began to carry goods and people along the new road.<sup>85</sup> The *trakt* altered Siberia's urban geography, favoring towns through which it passed, such as Tiumen', Tomsk, and Irkutsk, and marginalizing the towns it bypassed. The *trakt* explains why Tobolsk was displaced by Omsk as the capital of Siberia in 1824. New settlements multiplied along the *trakt*, even in remote regions such as the Baraba steppes, many of them settled by exiles.<sup>86</sup>

Farming and the discovery of metals turned Siberia into more than a fur quarry. The iron and copper of the Urals was exploited systematically from the time of Peter the Great, under the direction of a Tula gunsmith, N. Demidov. By the end of Peter's reign, the Urals had become one of Europe's major producers of iron, and Yekaterinburg was the region's industrial center. Further east, also in Peter's reign, silver and lead were discovered near Nerchinsk.<sup>87</sup> In the 1830s, gold would be discovered in Buriatia, on the Mongolian border, and metals began to rival furs as the main driver of Siberian trade.<sup>88</sup>

However, furs remained important, particularly in eastern Siberia. The fur trade had a huge impact on indigenous lives because it reached into every corner of Siberia. Peter I had established a government monopoly on the sale of sables as early as 1697, and officials in eastern Siberia were ruthless in their demands. In 1697, a Russian expedition from Anadyr led by a Cossack, V. Atlasov, entered the Kamchatka peninsula. The local Itelmen population lived in independent forest villages, from hunting and fishing. In summer, like many communities in northwestern North America, they took large quantities of salmon. Because there was no political organization above the village level, and villages often fought each other and took captives as slaves, imposing the government's will meant conquering the region, village by village.<sup>89</sup> The conquest took 50 years of savage fighting, during which 24,000 sables were taken, as well

as many other furs. By 1738, the Itelmen population had fallen by almost half to about 7,000 and, though they now had firearms, they could no longer put up active resistance.<sup>90</sup> By 1820 there were fewer than 2,000 Itelmen, most of whom were fully Russianized and lived like Russian settlers.<sup>91</sup>

To the north of Kamchatka, Russian forces encountered the Korak peoples, and, in the far north-east of Siberia, the Chukchi. The Korak and Chukchi had long traditions of inter-tribal warfare, and put up skillful and determined resistance, so the conquest of these regions also took the form of many small, but barbaric conflicts. In 1742, the Russian Senate issued an order demanding the extermination of Chukchi and Korak, or their settlement as farmers. In 1744–1747 a Cossack major, Pavlutskaa, led an army of Cossack, Korak, and Yukagir to fulfill this order, until he was killed himself, leaving his head among the Chukchi who kept it as a trophy for many years.<sup>92</sup>

Korak numbers declined from about 13,000 in 1700 to fewer than 5,000 by the 1760s. They submitted formally in 1757–1758. But these wars were also costly for Russia. In 1764 the government abandoned Anadyr fort, the center of its operations in the far north-east, and the Chukchi, further north, mostly survived. Indeed, their numbers eventually increased as Russian governments adopted more peaceful methods of control, including trade and treaties, some of which recognized Chukchi rights over their lands. The extreme cold of the Chukchi homelands may have spared them from diseases such as typhus, which had decimated the Itelmen and Korak in Kamchatka.<sup>93</sup>

The momentum of the fur trade eventually carried Russian soldiers and colonizers into the Americas, where they encountered Europeans who had followed furs in the opposite direction, westwards, through North America.

Russian interest in North America began with an official expedition of exploration, under the Dane Vitus Bering, that left St. Petersburg in 1725, arrived at Okhotsk in 1727, and then entered the straits that now carry Bering's name. A second expedition under Bering left the new Kamchatkan port of Petropavlovsk in 1741 and discovered the Aleutian Islands. After learning that Captain Cook had sold sea otter pelts in China at a significant profit (they were highly valued at the Qing court), Bering began seeking sea otters in North America.<sup>94</sup> In 1799 a Russian American Company was founded, modeled on the British Hudson's Bay Company and the East India Company, but designed primarily for the trade in sea otter furs.

Russians demanded sea otter and fox furs from the Aleutian (Unangan) islanders using traditional coercive methods. They settled on the island of Kodiak in 1784, using Aleuts as fighters in wars with mainland tribes, and began building forts along the Alaskan coast. Eventually, they built forts further south to supply grain for their Alaskan settlements. The furthest south was Fort Ross ("Rossiia"), just north of modern San Francisco, which was built in 1811. By the 1830s, 800 Russians lived in Alaska and the nearby islands, but this was too small a community to prevent British and American encroachment. Eventually, overhunting of sea otters, and the high cost of maintaining settlements so far away, persuaded the government to sell Fort Ross in 1841. In 1867 Russia sold Alaska to the US government for \$7.2 million, ending its brief foray into the Americas.<sup>95</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, most Siberian natives had lost their independence, and many elements of their traditional lifeways. Tribute and warfare exacted a huge toll, but so did smallpox, influenza, typhus, and syphilis. Commerce and cash undermined traditional lifeways because, as traditional subsistence activities lost their viability, local populations had to buy goods they had not needed before, including firearms, knives and gunpowder, vodka, tobacco, and many other goods supplied by Russian merchants. Sometimes they even had to buy furs to meet their *iasak* obligations. Bought on credit, such purchases left many in debt, and defaulters could be sold as slaves or forced to surrender traditional lands. Interest payments could accumulate fast. Within a few years, the debt on a small purchase such as an ax or a pair of boots could equal the value of an entire herd of horses.<sup>96</sup> Until its abolition in 1825, the slave trade flourished in cities such as Tomsk, Tobolsk, and Yakutsk, which sold captives taken by the Kazakh or Kyrgyz, or enslaved in local wars or forced into debt slavery.<sup>97</sup>

In the eighteenth century, Russian governments also began to put religious pressure on the populations of Siberia. Peter the Great required all natives to convert to Christianity and demanded oaths of loyalty to the Russian Tsar. This last decree provoked a rebellion amongst the growing Muslim population of Tara, on the Irtysh, south of Tobolsk, which had become the main center for trade with Central Asia and the home of many of the Central Asian “Bukharans” who managed Russian trade in Siberia and the Kazakh steppe.<sup>98</sup> Under Catherine the Great, policy towards non-Orthodox religions softened. West Siberian Tatars or “Bukharans” were allowed to build mosques, and by 1851 there were 188 mosques in western Siberia, mostly in Tobolsk province. In any case, most conversions to Christianity were superficial. Shamanistic beliefs and practices survived among the native population, and Christian saints such as St. Nicholas were adopted by local tribes such as the Khanti and the Yakut. The once shamanistic Buriat Mongols became Lamaist Buddhists in the eighteenth century. In the 1740s, the Russian government permitted the founding of lamaseries, and in 1764 it allowed the appointment of a Buriat chief lama. Mongol influences and Lamaist traditions of literacy explain why the Buriats were the only Siberian native peoples to have their own written language before 1917.<sup>99</sup>

Far from St. Petersburg, corruption was widespread and spectacular in Siberia. The first governor of the new province of eastern Siberia, created in 1756 with its capital at Irkutsk, was executed for corruption and extortion. Corruption reduced government revenues, so the central government worked hard to create a more law-abiding administrative system, but its efforts often had damaging side effects. The reforms introduced in 1822 by M. M. Speranskii were prompted by the corruption of his predecessor, Pestel. Though enlightened in their goals, Speranskii’s reforms imposed laws and structures incompatible with traditional lifeways, beginning with the claim that the Russian state, not the local peoples, owned the lands of Siberia. Speranskii’s reforms created three distinct categories of peoples: the settled, the nomadic (who pursued regular, predictable annual migrations), and the “wandering” (whose migrations were less regular). However, most Siberian peoples crossed all these

categories, and the real effect of the reforms was to force many to become sedentary. As those in the “settled” category were subjected to the same laws and taxes as Russian state peasants, this meant paying new taxes, sometimes in addition to the traditional *iasak*.<sup>100</sup>

The Russian government used Siberia not just to extract resources and revenues, but also as a dumping ground for criminals and dissidents. By 1900 there may have been 300,000 exiles in Siberia, about 5 percent of its total population.<sup>101</sup> Criminals, religious dissidents, beggars and prostitutes, prisoners of war, and political exiles all ended up in Siberia. Prisoners of war and political dissidents in particular created an intelligentsia amongst the Russian settlers, and laid the foundations for modern scholarship on Siberia’s history, ethnography, and geography. Such educated dissidents included 90 of the Decembrists who had rebelled in 1825, writers from Radishchev to Dostoyevsky, Polish nationalists (a group that multiplied after the first partition of Poland in 1772, but was topped up after the Napoleonic Wars and the risings of 1830 and 1863), and later, socialists and populists including both Lenin and Stalin.

## AFTER 1850: EASTERN SIBERIA, THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILROAD, AND MANCHURIA

In the late nineteenth century, the sale of Alaska and diminishing returns from furs reduced government interest in the Arctic regions of Siberia. The few Russians who settled in the Far North began to live like the local peoples; some adopted local languages and ceased to speak Russian. In the Far North, contacts with the empire were mediated by traders who visited native villages, where they bought furs, mammoth tusks, reindeer skins, and other local products in return for tobacco, tea, furs, guns and ammunition, knives, and other domestic metal goods. All trading involved vodka and it usually left natives deep in debt. But natives also adapted by altering their migration patterns to avoid new settlements or mines, whose inhabitants often seized their reindeer. Some leased their lands to commercial fishermen.<sup>102</sup> The Chukchi began to trade with American Alaska, exchanging whalebone, walrus tusks, and reindeer hides for rum, molasses, knives, and Winchester rifles, which were cheaper and of higher quality than Russian trade goods. Many learnt American English rather than Russian.<sup>103</sup>

In the Far East, Russian Siberia began once again to encroach on China’s sphere of influence in the Amur region and Manchuria. As in Central Asia, most advances were initiated by local commanders. In 1849, aware of increasing Chinese military weakness after the Taiping rebellion (1850–1864), a Russian naval commander, Gennadii Nevelskoi, hoisted the Russian flag at the mouth of the Amur. He wisely named the settlement Nikolaevsk in honor of Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855), and soon received Nicholas’s retrospective backing for this bravura display. In 1854, Nikolai Muravev, who had been appointed governor of eastern Siberia in 1847, conquered the Amur region, which Muscovy and the Qing had contested in the late seventeenth century. Muravev



built a fort at what is now Khabarovsk and once more St. Petersburg gave its blessing. Russia occupied the Island of Sakhalin, previously claimed by Japan, in 1853, and acquired it formally by treaty in 1875. In 1860, Vladivostok was founded just north of the Korean border, giving Russia a window on the East to match St. Petersburg's window on the West. The Chinese government had to accept what it could not prevent.

Once conquered, these distant acquisitions had to be defended, and that provided one of the justifications for building the Trans-Siberian railroad. Construction began in 1891, and by 1903 a single track ran the entire route. Like the Siberian *trakt*, the Trans-Siberian railroad had a profound effect on the towns and villages along its route. It accelerated migration, increased commercial exchanges, and allowed the rapid deployment of troops across the entire continent. It also encouraged imperial ambitions in the Far East. In 1893, Sergei Witte wrote to the Tsar:

On the Mongol–Tibetan–Chinese border major changes are imminent, which may harm Russia if European politics prevail there, but which could bring Russia countless blessings if we forestall western Europe in East Asian affairs. ... From the shore of the Pacific and from the heights of the Himalayas Russia will dominate not only the affairs of Asia, but those of Europe as well.<sup>104</sup>

Many shared Witte's visions of Russia's future in the Far East, including the English geographer Harold Mackinder, who wrote in 1904, just before the Russo-Japanese War:

The Russian army in Manchuria is as significant evidence of mobile land-power as the British army in South Africa was of sea-power. True, that the Trans-Siberian railway is still a single and precarious line of communication, but the century will not be old before all Asia is covered with railways. The spaces within the Russian Empire and Mongolia are so vast, and their potentialities in population, wheat, cotton, fuel and metals so incalculably great, that it is inevitable that a vast economic world, more or less apart, will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce.<sup>105</sup>

Such ideas encouraged Russian imperial ambitions. Between 1896 and 1903, China allowed Russia to build a “Chinese–Eastern Railway” through Manchuria to Vladivostok and south to Port Arthur. In 1900, in the wake of the Boxer uprising, Russian forces occupied much of northern Manchuria to protect the railway.<sup>106</sup> When the Russian government delayed on its promise to return Manchuria to China, Japan, which had industrialized rapidly in the decades since the Meiji restoration in 1868, and had its own ambitions in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, launched a surprise attack on Port Arthur in January 1904. Japanese commanders understood how vulnerable Russian forces were at the end of very long supply lines, but they also understood that Russian power would steadily increase as the railway improved. In May 1905, in the straits of Tsushima, the Japanese sunk a Russian fleet sent around the world from the Baltic. A bloody stalemate in the fighting on land was resolved

when revolution at home forced the Russian government to accept American offers of mediation and conclude the treaty of Portsmouth in August 1905.

Russian armies might well have won the Russo-Japanese War with better military decisions on land, more effective use of its navy, and greater political stability. Indeed, at the end of the war, Russia had more troops in Manchuria than Japan, whose armies were near to collapse.<sup>107</sup> The Russian mobilizational machine nearly did what it had done so many times before. But with Russian forces at the end of thinly stretched lines of communication, and revolution in the heartland, a weakened and indecisive Russian government lost its nerve.

## CHINA'S INNER EURASIAN EMPIRE

While Russia's empire expanded in Central Asia and the Far East, China's empire in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang crumbled.

## MONGOLIA BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Since the treaty of Dolonnor in 1691, and the defeat of the Zunghar Empire half a century later, Mongolia had become once more a colonial dependent of a Chinese Empire. In Qing thinking, the emperor was the direct ruler of Mongolia, as of Tibet, in his role as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjushri.<sup>108</sup>

While the Oirat heartlands of the Zunghar Empire had been devastated, the Khalkha Mongol lands also suffered during the Zunghar wars, because of the military and tax burdens imposed to pay for them. But unlike Inner Mongolia, and much of Zungharia, Khalka Mongolia was not opened to Chinese migration, though it was opened to Chinese merchants, who soon dominated Mongolian commercial networks.

Mongolia had few towns. Most important by the late eighteenth century was Khuriye, the once nomadic tent city or *ordo* of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu. Towns and lamaseries offered opportunities for employment or protection that could not be found in the steppes. As the headquarters of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus, Khuriye attracted many lamas. They, in turn, drew in merchants and tradespeople. After the treaties of Nerchinsk (1689) and Kiakhta (1728), Khuriye had become an important stopping point for Russian and Chinese caravans traveling from Kiakhta to China. Here, they catered to the needs of the lamas and officials that gathered around the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, and changed their horses and oxen for camels before heading south into the Gobi desert.<sup>109</sup>

Khuriye became a permanent town after 1778, when it settled where the Selbe river joins the Tuul river, at the site of modern Ulaanbaatar. The Tuul river supplied it with water, and BogdKhan mountain to the south shielded it from cold winter winds. Foreigners called the town Urga, after the Mongol word "örgö," or "royal yurt." Mongols referred to it as "Da Khuriye," or "Great Lamastery." Elsewhere, military camps such as Khobdo and Uliasutai also turned into permanent towns, but none were as large as Khuriye, though even Khuriye had no more than 7,000 people in 1820, a thousand of whom

were lamas. The building of Gandan monastery in 1809 enhanced Khuriye's importance by providing a symbolic balance to the monastery of Erdeni Zuu in the former capital of Karakorum.<sup>110</sup> The evolution of steppe towns such as Khuriye was a story that travelers through Khan Mongke's empire would have found familiar.

The larger lamaseries encouraged a low-grade urbanization, as sedentary populations of monks, clerks, artisans, and officials clustered around them. By the nineteenth century, there were 1,900 lamaseries in Inner and Outer Mongolia, and 243 living Buddhas. Most families had at least one son in a lamasery, so that monks may have accounted for one third of the male population in what amounted, in practice, to a form of welfare for poor nomadic households.<sup>111</sup> The increasing number of formally celibate men who ended up in lamaseries may help explain Mongolia's demographic stagnation before the twentieth century.<sup>112</sup> In 1800, Mongolia's population was probably smaller than in the time of Khan Mongke.

Chinese taxation was burdensome. Worst was the requirement to maintain the post-horse system and supply military garrisons, particularly along the border with Russia. Local communities had to support watch posts, each with 30 or 40 soldiers. That meant providing food, well-fed horses, clothing, and arms. In a largely non-monetary economy, the requisitioning of horses was particularly burdensome because, even if horses were paid for at their full value, herders lost their breeding potential, the main source of income for nomadic households and for the Mongolian economy as a whole.<sup>113</sup> Mongolian nobles paid a heavy price in the ceremonial expenses associated with compulsory attendance at court functions in Beijing. In 1832 the *zasag* (or prince of a local "banner") of Setsen *aimag* (or province) had to go to Beijing for New Year ceremonies. His costs, amounting to 5,000 taels (at a time when a soldier's pay was 18 taels a year), included payment for five camels used to transport ice from the Kerulen river, for the prince's personal use.<sup>114</sup>

New commercial networks were created in what had been a world without cash, mostly by the activities of Chinese merchants, who set up shops in the towns, or visited local settlements and lamaseries with their goods. Such networks gave Chinese merchants commercial power over all classes, particularly through the sale of goods on credit, which could create long-term indebtedness. By the later nineteenth century, Chinese merchants faced competition from Russian and Siberian traders.<sup>115</sup>

Qing administrative structures had weakened traditional political ties and created new local loyalties. The Qing had divided Mongolia into almost 50 banners (*khoshuu*). Officials used maps to fix the borders of each banner. Each was ruled by a governor or *zasag*, usually a local prince, from a banner center that was often just a collection of tents.<sup>116</sup> The population of each banner was divided into *sums*, or "arrows," each of which had to supply 50 troops. The Qing restricted movement between banners to make tax collection easier, but this cut traditional migration routes and undermined the authority of the clan leaders who had traditionally allocated migration routes. The erosion of traditional clan structures explains why rebellions were rare. When it occurred, protest took isolated, elemental, and spontaneous forms, and there would be

no large rebellions until Qing power collapsed in 1911. Anti-Chinese riots were usually little more than drunken attacks on Chinese shops or traders.<sup>117</sup>

Like the Russian Empire, Qing Mongolia consisted of two broad groups, representatives, respectively, of the mobilizers and the mobilizees. The *taiji* or hereditary nobles and princes (technically descendants of Chinggis Khan) were free from taxation and symbolized by the color white.<sup>118</sup> In the early nineteenth century, *taijis* could account for 10 percent of non-monastic lay males. Commoners, symbolized by the color black, were classified as the *albatu* (who served the state administration in the banners), the *khamjilga*, or serfs of the *taiji* (a status not abolished until 1923), and a smaller group of *shabi*, or lamasery serfs. There was a small class of slaves, many of them bankrupt debtors, or children sold by impoverished parents.<sup>119</sup> Lamas made up a distinct class, symbolized by the color yellow. High lamas had similar privileges and rights to *taijis*. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were as many as 120 *khutughtus* in the Khalkha lands and Inner Mongolia, and their leader, the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, owned tens of thousands of *shabi*.<sup>120</sup>

In practice, divisions of wealth were limited, and some *taiji* lived much like their herders. Here, to pick an example at random of someone not quite at the bottom of the class structure, is a description from a later period, which captures the texture of these differences. It comes from the memoirs of a Communist partisan, D. Jambaljav, who was born in 1894.

When I was nine years old, my father's mother, the old nun Ania, used to tell me how my grandfather, though he was supposed to be a *taiji* with four retainers, was chronically poor, and used to feed his children by such ways as hunting gazelles with his flintlock, or by watching the road and taking in caravanners for the night and by looking after their worn-out camels and oxen for them and returning them when recovered, in exchange for a bit of grain. My father, the *taiji* Dashzeveg, was a poor man's son, and from the time when he was young he used to hire himself out to his own retainer, the relay-rider Sonom, and do relay work for him, or caravaning, or farm-laboring. When he was thirty-seven he married my mother Namsrai, and I was their only child. In the end we had three oxen of the age of ten or so, four cows, and forty-odd sheep and goats. But we had no riding horse. The autumn I reached twenty we bought a pregnant mare for twenty-five bushels of grain and used her foal for riding. We began to get a start then, but we never had more than six horses all told.<sup>121</sup>

Still, differences in legal rights did matter. While nobles could be punished by fines or demotion, ordinary Mongolians were subject to harsh forms of corporal punishment, such as being forced to wear a sort of mobile stocks, the "cangue." Those wearing cangues could not get through doorways, and had to sleep outside through Mongolia's harsh winters. Differences in wealth also created semi-feudal forms of dependence. All but the wealthiest of nomadic households depended on nobles and lamaseries for wage work and for protection in times of difficulty.<sup>122</sup>

The unpredictability of life in the steppes explains why so many herders fell into debt, mostly to Chinese merchants. With few markets and no banks, merchants loaned money at high interest rates, and enjoyed the protection of

local officials and lamaseries. Herders borrowed to replace lost livestock, or to buy textiles or grain or tea, pots, and saddles. But they could get cash only in the spring and summer when they sold their livestock, and if they did not repay loans on time, interest on their debts accumulated fast. Bawden argues that the growing indebtedness of Mongolians “was the fundamental factor producing economic and social decay during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, lamaseries were free of taxation and labor obligations, so wealth concentrated in their hands, and they, too, acted informally as bankers.

Mongolia had a tiny literate elite, most of whose members were officials or lamas. They used Mongol, Manchu, and Chinese, though within the lamaseries Tibetan played the role that Latin had played in medieval Europe. By preserving the rudiments of literate culture, Buddhism provided a mildly modernizing force in Mongol life. In the absence of a native merchant class, lamaseries were also better accumulators of capital than the aristocracy.

Mongolian self-identities were religious and dynastic before they were national. Of the symbolic importance of Erdeni Zuu, the lamasery built next to the remains of Karakorum, the Russian scholar Pozdneev wrote in the 1890s that:

Here almost every column and hill, every temple and every *burkhan* [hill], calls to mind some individual or holds the tale of some event close to the heart of every Khalkha. The very mention of Erdeni Dzu arouses love for his native land in the heart of every Mongol, and ultimately, moves him to fall on bended knee in trembling delight before this holy place.<sup>124</sup>

Before the twentieth century, Mongolian self-identities were bound up with Buddhism, and Mongolia’s imperial past. Apart from China, Mongolia had little contact with other countries before the opening of the first Russian consulate in Khuriye in 1860.<sup>125</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mongolia was ruled formally by the eighth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1870–1924), the Bogda or Holy One, the Bogda Gegeen, the Holy Brilliance or Holy Incarnate Lama, the latest in a line of incarnate lamas that could be traced back to Zanabazar in the seventeenth century, and, by a more esoteric scholarship, to the Buddha, Shakyamuni (see Figure 11.2).<sup>126</sup> The Khutugtus were regarded as Chinggisids, and thereby entitled by their lineage to rule Khalkha Mongolia.

Born in Lhasa in 1870, the eighth Khutugtu was identified at the age of 4, and brought to the Mongolian capital in 1874. Lamas trained him for his future role as spiritual leader of the Khalkha Mongols. He was a rebellious teenager. He took up drinking and smoking and had affairs with both men and women, but as a living incarnation of the Buddha his teachers had little choice but to indulge these whims. He contracted syphilis, which eventually destroyed his eyesight. Though fascinated by modern gadgets (and the founder of Khuriye’s first zoo), the Khutugtu remained deeply committed to Lamaist tradition. He demanded that every household keep a statue of the goddess Baldan Lhamo in their tents, and at colossal expense he built a 24-meter-high



**Figure 11.2** Sharav’s portrait of the eighth Jebtsundamba. N. Tsultem, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sharav\\_bogd\\_khan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sharav_bogd_khan.jpg).

statue of the “Eye-Opening Avalokiteshvara.” Eventually, he would become a Mongolian patriot and advocate of a greater Mongolian polity.

Poverty, isolation, and low levels of literacy prevented the emergence of anything like a modern nationalist movement, or even a Mongolian secular intelligentsia that might have pressed for modernization and independence. Anti-Chinese feeling increased after 1906, when the Qing launched administrative reforms that would have incorporated Mongolia more tightly within the Qing system, and accelerated Chinese migration into Outer Mongolia.<sup>127</sup> Chinese migration, like Russian migration into Kazakhstan and the Semirechie, had already transformed large parts of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, but migration to Outer Mongolia had been limited by the lack of suitable land for farming, by distance, and by government regulation. Now, it seemed, it was Mongolia’s turn. Though unpopular in Mongolia, these changes came too late to allow large-scale migrations. Still, Khuriye itself did become more Chinese. Its population grew from 30,000 in 1870 to 100,000 in the early twentieth century, by which time half of its inhabitants were Chinese.<sup>128</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Russian political, cultural, and military influence increased. In 1851 a Transbaikal Cossack army was formed along the Mongolian border, recruited mainly from Buriat Mongols. In 1873, troops from these units were sent into Mongolia during the Dungan uprising in Xinjiang. They returned in 1900 during the Boxer uprising.<sup>129</sup> By the early twentieth century, there was a small but influential community of Russians in Khuriye, and Russian scholars were laying the foundations for a modern tradition of Mongolian studies.<sup>130</sup>

Qing reforms and increasing Russian influence raised new concerns about Mongolia's future, and prompted the beginnings of a modern sense of Mongolian nationalism. In July 1911, the Khutugtu sent a delegation to St. Petersburg to ask for Russian support and weapons to create an independent Mongolian nation. The Russian government responded cautiously, agreeing to send 200 Cossacks as escorts for the returning diplomats, as well as 15,000 rifles for a Mongolian army. This was more than a token gesture, as Russian officials were beginning to see Mongolia as a potential buffer against Chinese or Japanese pressure in eastern Siberia.<sup>131</sup> As early as 1853, Russia's governor-general in eastern Siberia, Nikolai Muravev, wrote:

In case the Manchu Dynasty fell and decided to retreat into its homeland Manchuria, we should act at once to take steps to prevent a new Chinese Government in Peking from extending its authority over Mongolia, which in such an event could be proclaimed our protectorate.<sup>132</sup>

In October 1911, Qing rule collapsed, and a Republican government was created in Nanjing under Sun Yat-sen. Any residual ties of loyalty to the Qing dynasty snapped, and in December the Mongol government declared independence, and asked the last Chinese governor, or *amban*, to leave. The 200 Cossacks dispatched by Russia were used to police Khuriye and to protect the Chinese *amban* from reprisals. On December 29, 1911, the Khutugtu was enthroned as Mongolia's Holy Emperor, becoming one of the world's last religious autocrats. Suddenly it seemed there was a new chance to unite all Mongols under a single ruler, with its own government and army.<sup>133</sup> The Qing dynasty ended in February 1912, with the abdication of the boy emperor, Puyi.

At first, the Khutugtu's authority did not reach beyond the two eastern provinces or *aimags*, but Qing power soon collapsed in western Mongolia as well. Only in Khobdo did the Qing governor or *amban* resist the demand to surrender power. He executed the first Mongolian envoys and 3,000 Mongol troops were sent to enforce Mongolian control, led by a Mongolian officer, Damdinsuren, and an Astrakhan-born Kalmyk lama called Dambijantsan, who claimed to be a reincarnation of the Zunghar leader Amursana. In August 1912 the Mongolian forces took Khobdo as lamas prayed for success on a nearby mountain. The victors tore the hearts out of their Chinese captives and used their blood to dedicate their war banners. For the next two years, Dambijantsan ruled western Mongolia, until he was arrested by Russian troops in February 1914. Dambijantsan's role in these conflicts helped increase Russian

influence in western Mongolia, but it was also a reminder that the ancient divisions between eastern and western Mongolia could re-emerge. Rupen argues that the 1912 victory in Khobdo was much more important than the 1911 declaration of independence in establishing Mongolian independence.<sup>134</sup>

Mongol leaders in most of the 49 banners of Inner Mongolia declared their allegiance to the Khutugtu. But hopes for the creation of a Greater Mongolia, uniting Inner and Outer Mongolia, were dashed when it became clear that Russia would support only an Outer Mongolian state, in order to avoid antagonizing Japan or the new Chinese government. At a conference in Kiakhta (September 1914–June 1915), Russia, China, and Mongolia agreed to treat Inner Mongolia as part of China, but to support the creation of an autonomous Outer Mongolia under Chinese supervision. In any case, despite initial enthusiasm for a pan-Mongolian nationalism, there were already significant differences between Mongolian leaders from Outer Mongolia, which retained its nomadic traditions, and Inner Mongolia, which was largely agrarian, and much more Sinicized.<sup>135</sup>

The Kiakhta agreement gave Outer Mongolia international recognition for the first time. Formally at least, Outer Mongolia was now an independent state, though Russian influence was growing. Russian soldiers began to train the nucleus of a Mongolian army, and some of those they trained, including Sukhe-bator, would play major roles in Mongolian history. Russian doctors introduced modern medicine and veterinary skills; Russian educationists set up the first modern secondary school (which was attended by the future dictator, Choibalsan), and sent many of its graduates to Russian schools in Irkutsk; almost 50 primary schools were established.<sup>136</sup> Journalists created the first Mongolian newspapers under the editorship of the educationist Jamtsarano, and Russian advisers helped put the government's finances in order. Mongols from Russia, mostly from Buriatia, played an important role in these changes.

As it entered the twentieth century, independent Mongolia was drifting into the Russian orbit, where it would remain for most of the twentieth century.

## XINJIANG BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Xinjiang was further from China than Mongolia, it was more culturally and economically diverse, and it was harder to control, so that regional political structures, networks, and cultural traditions played a larger role here than in colonial Mongolia. But the destruction of the Zunghar Empire had erased entire peoples and cultural traditions from much of the Zunghar steppe. The Chinese conquest had also brought the entire region under Chinese control for the first time in many centuries.

The nature of Chinese control varied across Xinjiang's three main regions.<sup>137</sup> Though largely Muslim, Uighuristan had the closest ties to China. Zungharia, depopulated after the defeat of the Zunghar Empire, attracted large numbers of Chinese or Hui immigrants, many of them settled in military garrisons. Qing control was weakest in the Tarim basin, and sometimes non-existent in the western province of Kashgaria, which bordered on Transoxiana.



Like other borderland regions of the Qing Empire, from Manchuria to Mongolia and Qinhai, Xinjiang was administered under the banner system. About half of all Qing troops in Xinjiang were bannermen from Mongolia or Manchuria, while the rest were Chinese. Most Qing soldiers were based in Zungharia, where there was more pastureland for horses, particularly along the Ili valley, the old Zunghar heartland. As so often in the past, the Tarim basin was controlled by armies based in Zungharia. Xinjiang as a whole was ruled by a military governor based in the old Zunghar capital of Khulja (modern Yining) in Zungharia, with subordinates in Ili, Tarbaghatai, and Kashgar/Yarkand. Imperial officials received orders from China and sent back information in voluminous correspondence carried by post-horse couriers. Before the 1880s most of these officials were Mongols or Manchu.<sup>138</sup>

At lower levels, the Qing managed Xinjiang through local leaders, both in nomadic and farming regions, with the partial exception of the more Sinicized regions of Uighuristan, where most of the officials were Manchu or Mongol. Such indirect rule was similar to the systems used in both Russian Central Asia and British India. At first, the Qing made little attempt to change the region's deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions.<sup>139</sup>

But the Qing *were* interested in revenues, because controlling Xinjiang was expensive – salaries alone cost millions of ounces of silver each year – and Qing officials often wondered if the expense was justified. Xinjiang had been occupied not for its wealth, which was limited, but to end attacks from pastoralist armies, and this was no longer a serious threat since the defeat of the Zunghar Empire. So the main economic challenge was to pay for the region's administration from local resources. This goal was never achieved, despite many attempts. Qing officials encouraged agriculture, particularly cotton growing in the southern Tarim basin, and helped develop local irrigation systems. In Zungharia, huge state farms were created, in another tradition that went back to the Han era. The results were impressive. Indeed, from the Qing conquest to the mid-nineteenth century, the area of cultivated land increased by 10 times, rising to almost 800,000 hectares. The Qing administration also encouraged handicrafts industries and iron, copper, and jade mining, and invested in improved roads and communications. But none of these activities generated enough revenue to cover the region's administrative costs.<sup>140</sup>

Distance, limited funds, and religious, cultural, and ethnic differences all threatened Qing control, particularly over the Tarim basin. Here, Qing officials feared the commercial influence of Kokand, which had traded vigorously with Xinjiang since the defeat of the Zunghar Empire. Kokand also hosted members of the Afaqi clan of khojas who were determined to return to power in Kashgar.<sup>141</sup> In the 1820s, Afaqi leaders waged a low-grade guerrilla war in Kashgaria with support from local Kyrgyz nomads, and some of Kashgar's population. In 1826, their forces overran several Tarim basin cities and massacred local Chinese before being defeated by Chinese forces the next year. This attack, and an Afaqi invasion launched in 1830 with Kokandi support, forced the Chinese to settle more Chinese troops and officials in the Tarim basin.

Defense of the Tarim basin cost so much that Qing officials seriously considered abandoning the western Tarim basin. But there was really no alternative frontier. In 1832 Qing officials effectively gave up control of the Kashgar border and its lucrative customs by allowing Kokandi merchants to trade freely with the region. Kokandi merchants flourished and, as Joseph Fletcher pointed out, the arrangement was similar to those the Qing would negotiate with western governments after the Opium War of 1839–1841.<sup>142</sup>

In 1864, the Qing lost control of most of southern Xinjiang after a rebellion provoked by new attempts to raise local taxes. The rebellion began with an uprising of Dungsans or Chinese Muslims, but was eventually taken over by Uighur nobles or *begs*. In 1865, the Kokandi ruler Alim Quli, who was facing increasing pressure from Russian forces, sent an army to Kashgar under his commander-in-chief, Ya'qub Beg. Over the next few years, Ya'qub Beg conquered most of southern Xinjiang as far as Turfan, and established himself as an autonomous ruler with Kashgar as his capital. He relied on the support of Kokandi troops and imposed strict Islamic law. With trade to China cut off and troops stationed permanently in the Tarim basin, his rule proved burdensome for the population. Aware of the many threats to his power both internally and from the Qing and also the Russians, who were attacking Kokandi forces in Central Asia, Ya'qub Beg secured formal recognition from both the Russians and the British, and eventually accepted Ottoman suzerainty. Briefly, these negotiations gave Ya'qub Beg's regime a modest international legitimacy.

Ya'qub's death in May 1877 ended effective opposition to Qing rule. In 1878, in one of the Qing dynasty's last successful military campaigns, and after Kokand itself had been conquered by Russian forces (in 1875), Qing armies under General Zuo Zongtang marched into Xinjiang from Lanzhou and reconquered the region at great cost. In modern Chinese historiography, this campaign is seen as a successful attempt to prevent colonial powers from undermining Chinese unity.<sup>143</sup> However, at the time, many Chinese officials, more concerned with European threats to China's coastline, opposed such an expensive operation in a remote province with apparently limited value to China.

The Qing reconquest ruined large parts of Xinjiang and destroyed the previous administrative structures, so that an entirely new administrative system had to be created by General Zuo Zongtang. From now on, Chinese authorities would increasingly use Han rather than Manchu or Mongol or local officials to govern Xinjiang. In 1884 the Qing formally created a new Xinjiang province, with Urumqi as its administrative center.<sup>144</sup> In 1881, at the treaty of St. Petersburg, Russia returned the Ili valley region, which it had conquered in 1871. The Chinese government now embarked on a policy of Sinicization that included introducing Chinese language and educational curricula into Xinjiang's schools. But Chinese influence was limited by the fact that Xinjiang's main trade links were now with Russian Central Asia. Attempts to reassert Chinese authority would end after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, leaving a vacuum that would be partially filled from Russian-controlled Central Asia and partly by 40 years of warlord rule.

## CONCLUSIONS

By 1914, despite increasingly uncertain and often hesitant direction from St. Petersburg, Russia, unlike China, seemed to have proved its credentials as a modern imperialist power. While China had retreated from its Inner Eurasian empires, Russian armies had reached the limits of Inner Eurasia in eastern Siberia, on the shores of the Black Sea, and along the borders with Persia and Afghanistan. In some areas, such as Poland, the Russian Empire had overflowed those borders, and in Mongolia and Manchuria it had increased its influence in what had once been part of a Qing Empire. Glitches such as defeat in the Russo-Japanese War could perhaps be seen as the result of temporary imperial over-reach. In retrospect, it is clear that the Russian mobilizational machine, despite its achievements, was functioning at the very limits of its capacity. After 1914, Russia, like Qing China, would enter a new “Time of Troubles.”

## NOTES

- 1 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 166.
- 2 Mironov, *Social History*, 2.
- 3 Taagepera, “Overview of the Growth of the Russian Empire,” 3.
- 4 This argument is developed in Christian, “‘Inner Eurasia’ as a Unit of World History,” and in Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia, Vol. 1*, Introduction.
- 5 The eighteenth-century origins of modern Russian nationalism are traced well in Rogger, *National Consciousness in Eighteenth Century Russia*; see also Weeks, “Managing Empire.”
- 6 Weeks, “Managing Empire,” 37–38.
- 7 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 15.
- 8 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 141.
- 9 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 16–17.
- 10 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 156–157.
- 11 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 69.
- 12 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 70.
- 13 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 71.
- 14 Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam*, 19–20.
- 15 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 40.
- 16 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 72ff.
- 17 Cited in Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 65.
- 18 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 106.
- 19 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, 94; Smith, *Red Nations*, 5.
- 20 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 118–119.
- 21 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 120.
- 22 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 125.
- 23 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, 95.
- 24 Cited in Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 123.

- 25 These figures are very approximate; Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 16, gives various nineteenth-century estimates for Bukhara's population, ranging from 2 to 3.5 million.
- 26 There is a good discussion of the complexities of Central Asian identities in Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, Ch. 6.
- 27 Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 21.
- 28 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 135.
- 29 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 42, 57.
- 30 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 127.
- 31 See Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 43, and Mukminova, "The Janids," 50–51, on Janid administrative structures.
- 32 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 163.
- 33 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 377.
- 34 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 127.
- 35 Khalid, "Society and Politics in Bukhara," 373ff.
- 36 Bregel, "The New Uzbek States," 397.
- 37 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 129.
- 38 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 35.
- 39 Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 15.
- 40 Bregel, "The New Uzbek States," 399–400.
- 41 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 146.
- 42 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 146–147, 160; Paul, *Zentralasien*, 377–380.
- 43 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 147; Bregel, "The New Uzbek States," 404; Paul, *Zentralasien*, 379.
- 44 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 155, Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 45.
- 45 Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 44 and 257; Paul, *Zentralasien*, 425ff.
- 46 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 432.
- 47 Cited in Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 42.
- 48 Abdurakhimova, "Tsarist Russia and Central Asia," 127.
- 49 Cited in Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 194.
- 50 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 87, on the number of *mahallas* in Tashkent.
- 51 Cited in Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 58.
- 52 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 20.
- 53 MacKenzie, "Conquest and Administration of Turkestan," 216.
- 54 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 47.
- 55 Khalid, "Society and Politics in Bukhara," 368ff.
- 56 Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, 97ff., on the "Turkman acephalous political order."
- 57 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 45.
- 58 Cited from Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 196.
- 59 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 90; 90 and 91 include a good summary of the odd combination of traditional authoritarianism and military rule, with the odd dab of 1860s liberalism, that characterized Russian rule in Central Asia.
- 60 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 79; Abdurakhimova, "Tsarist Russia and Central Asia," 130–131.
- 61 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, 105.

- 62 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 74.
- 63 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 223.
- 64 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 60–69.
- 65 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 102–104.
- 66 See, for example, Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam*, Chs. 1 and 2.
- 67 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 105, 161.
- 68 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 792; the most important book on Jadidism in Central Asia is Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*.
- 69 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 78, 92.
- 70 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 236.
- 71 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 182; Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 117.
- 72 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 10, 70.
- 73 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 62.
- 74 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 65.
- 75 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 165–166; Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, 14.
- 76 Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, 15.
- 77 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 64.
- 78 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 198–199.
- 79 Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 66.
- 80 Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 44–45.
- 81 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 788.
- 82 Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 788; Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 170.
- 83 As pointed out by Hartley, *Siberia*, xiii.
- 84 Figures from Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 115, 162, 190.
- 85 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 190.
- 86 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 190–191, 123.
- 87 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 116.
- 88 Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 119.
- 89 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 131–133, is on their lifeways.
- 90 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 136–139.
- 91 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 143.
- 92 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 146.
- 93 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 149–150.
- 94 Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 83; and Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 152.
- 95 Based on Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 200–202.
- 96 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 158–159.
- 97 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 114.
- 98 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 120–121.
- 99 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 155–156, 162, 170–171.
- 100 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 112, 157.
- 101 Hartley, *Siberia*, 116.
- 102 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 97–101.
- 103 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 106.
- 104 Cited in Hosking, 328–329.
- 105 Mackinder, “Geographical Pivot of History,” 311.
- 106 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 202–204.
- 107 Fuller, “The Imperial Army,” 542.
- 108 Nakami et al., “Mongolia,” 340.
- 109 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 115–116.

- 110 Atwood, "Ulaanbaatar," in *Encyclopedia*, 566–567; Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 115–116; Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 110.
- 111 Heissig, *Religions of Mongolia*, 1.
- 112 This is argued by Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society*, 177.
- 113 Bawden, *Modern History*, 100–101.
- 114 Bawden, *Modern History*, 102; soldiers' pay, 104; on the requirement that nobles visit Beijing, see Nakami et al., "Mongolia," 341.
- 115 Nakami et al., "Mongolia," 342–344.
- 116 Atwood, "Banners," in *Encyclopedia*, 30–32; Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society*, 322; Nakami et al., "Mongolia," 340.
- 117 Bawden, *Modern History*, 173.
- 118 See Atwood, "Social Classes in the Qing Period," in *Encyclopedia*, 507–509.
- 119 This account comes from Bawden, *Modern History*, 137–138.
- 120 Narangoa and Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia*, 121.
- 121 Bawden, *Modern History*, 146.
- 122 Bawden, *Modern History*, 143, 177.
- 123 Bawden, *Modern History*, 83, 99, 154.
- 124 Cited in Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 12.
- 125 Bawden, *Modern History*, 135.
- 126 Biography based on Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 269–271.
- 127 Nakami et al., "Mongolia," 345–346.
- 128 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 19.
- 129 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 7.
- 130 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 19–21, is interesting on the leading representatives of the Russian community in Mongolia, and their links with the Russian government.
- 131 Nakami et al. "Mongolia," 346–348, on the 1911 mission to Russia and the emergence of new forms of nationalism; Onon and Pritchatt, *Asia's First Modern Revolution*, 14. Rupen says that Semenov was amongst these returning troops, and perhaps also Ungern-Sternberg (see Ch. 15); Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 5, 7.
- 132 Cited in Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 6–7.
- 133 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 7–8; Bawden, *Modern History*, 194.
- 134 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 8.
- 135 Nakami et al., "Mongolia," 351.
- 136 Bawden, *Modern History*, 247.
- 137 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 230.
- 138 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 98–100.
- 139 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 101–102; Qin, "Western China (Xinjiang)," 368.
- 140 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 103–104, 312.
- 141 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 110.
- 142 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 114, citing Joseph F. Fletcher, "The Heyday of the Ch'ing Order"; Fletcher's case is strengthened by the fact that some of the officials who negotiated the 1832 agreement with Kokand were also involved in negotiating the treaty of Nanjing with Britain.
- 143 This approach is reflected in Qin, "Western China (Xinjiang)," 372: "At the time that Zuo Zongtang led his army into Xinjiang, he crushed the colonialists who wished to divide China, ensuring that its territory and sovereign powers remained intact and unified."
- 144 Details in Qin, "Western China (Xinjiang)," 374–375.

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## [12] 1914–1921: UNRAVELING AND REBUILDING

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### INTRODUCTION

Some have argued that Tsarist society was already doomed by 1900. But we have seen that much recent research portrays a rapidly industrializing society, whose archaic features stand out precisely because of the speed and scale of change. The empire's main problems were symptoms of growth rather than stagnation. But they were tricky enough to require intelligent and agile leadership, and that was missing in the early twentieth century. Given this book's focus on the importance of leadership in Inner Eurasian mobilizational systems, it should come as no surprise if I argue that, like fish in the old Russian proverb, "*Ryba gnyot s golov*" ("fish rot from the head"), the Tsarist mobilizational system also rotted from the head downwards.

It was not inevitable that the system would collapse, even under the immense strains of World War I. It is not absurd to imagine a twentieth century in which the Russian Empire survived the war and emerged as a flourishing capitalist society under a somewhat archaic political system. The Russian mobilization machine broke down mainly because of a failure of leadership in a period of turbulent change, the type of change that the system had survived many times before. Not until the center collapsed did the whole system break down. And only then did the peripheries fall away. As in 1260, in the early seventeenth century, and once again in 1991, the timing and nature of the collapse reflected a breakdown at the top of the system. This is why the final collapse caught so many observers by surprise. As so often in the past, disciplined elite networks had held together a mobilization machine that kept functioning even under great pressure. But when elite solidarity finally snapped, the system sprang apart. In a highly centralized system the center was the system's least predictable and most vulnerable component, because its functioning depended so much on the whims, the personality, the political skills, and the fate of a tiny group of leaders.

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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Unlike the crises of 1260 and 1991, but like that of the early seventeenth century, the 1917 breakdown was followed by the rapid creation of a new mobilizational system that borrowed much from its predecessor, equaled it in scale, and eventually exceeded it in power and discipline. The rapid rebuilding of a new mobilizational system also depended on the quality of leadership, in this case the extremely skillful leadership that allowed the Bolsheviks to seize political opportunities few others had seen in a fast-moving crisis. If Tsarism had not collapsed, those opportunities would not have arisen and Bolshevism would have remained a historical irrelevance.

What distinguishes the 1917 crisis most decisively from those of 1260, the early seventeenth century, and the 1991 crisis is the scale of elite turnover. The 1917 crisis removed not just the central rivet of the old system, the autocratic monarchy, but the entire network of landowners, officials, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs that had bound it together for centuries. At the top of the system, hardly anyone survived. However, at middle and lower levels of government and within the army, there was much more continuity in personnel, and this may help explain many continuities in the governing style and methods of the Tsarist and Soviet systems, above all their shared commitment to disciplined, autocratic government. Towards the end of his life, Lenin feared that middle-level Soviet officials might preserve political attitudes and styles of rule from the Tsarist period, and in his critique of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky argued that such continuities helped explain the Stalinist “betrayal” of the revolution. Despite their profound ideological differences, the Tsarist and Soviet elites faced the same fundamental challenge of modernizing a peasant country in the era of fossil fuels, while coping with huge military and economic challenges from abroad. That shared challenge, combined with the survival of many middle-level officials, may help explain the extent of evolutionary convergence between the two systems. Much survived into the Soviet era from the political culture of Russia’s traditional mobilizational system.<sup>1</sup>

### *WAR: 1914–FEBRUARY 1917*

In July 1914 war broke out between the two superpower alliances that had emerged in early twentieth-century Europe. The cold wars conducted between imperial powers in the late nineteenth century and fought out in colonial empires far from Europe now turned into a hot war in Europe’s industrial heartland. Many observers, impressed by the German blitzkrieg of 1870, expected the war to end fast. Instead, as combatants learnt how to mobilize the vast human, economic, and military resources of modern, fossil-fuel-powered industries, from machine guns to tanks and planes, the war turned into the largest and one of the bloodiest ever fought. It was also the first major fossil fuels war. As Daniel Yergin writes, “in the course of the First World War, oil and the internal combustion engine changed every dimension of warfare, even the very meaning of mobility on land and sea and in the air.”<sup>2</sup> The struggle to adapt fast to the new technical, economic, military, and organizational realities and opportunities of the fossil fuels era put such strain on existing political

systems and economies that, by its end, three traditional empires had collapsed: the German Empire, the Habsburg Empire, and the Russian Empire.

How ready was the Russian Empire for war?<sup>3</sup> Some, at least, were convinced even before the war began that the empire would collapse. A few months before war broke out, a former police official and Minister of the Interior, P. N. Durnovo, predicted what might happen with eerie precision:

In the event of defeat, ... social revolution in its most extreme form is inevitable. ... the trouble will start with the blaming of the Government for all disasters. In the legislative institutions a bitter campaign against the Government will begin, followed by revolutionary agitations throughout the country, with Socialist slogans, capable of arousing and rallying the masses, beginning with the division of the land and succeeded by a division of all valuables and property. The defeated army, having lost its most dependable men, and carried away by the tide of primitive peasant desire for land, will find itself too demoralized to serve as a bulwark of law and order. The legislative institutions and the intellectual opposition parties, lacking real authority in the eyes of the people, will be powerless to stem the popular tide, aroused by themselves, and Russia will be flung into hopeless anarchy, the issue of which cannot be foreseen.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the system did survive two and a half years of grueling and debilitating warfare, and that suggests it had more resilience than Durnovo supposed.

By some criteria, the Russian army performed well. Military reforms since 1874 had created a large reserve army which, by 1914, numbered 2.6 million, in addition to an active army of 1.4 million.<sup>5</sup> The peacetime Russian army was already Europe's largest. In 1914, 4 million more were drafted from the reserves, and a further 10 million would be drafted during the rest of the war. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War had revealed significant weaknesses, and after 1906 the government had committed a lot of resources to military reform, with the support of the Duma. In the years after 1906, Russian industrial growth and military reforms were impressive enough to persuade many German leaders, including Moltke, the Chief of the German General Staff, that Russian military capabilities were increasing fast, so that if war was inevitable it had better come sooner rather than later. As Wildman has shown, there are few signs that the army was collapsing even early in 1917.<sup>6</sup> Discipline held at the front, and, though it retreated, the army kept at bay the richer and better equipped armies of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires for three years. The war would also demonstrate for the first time the military significance of oil, a resource that Germany lacked, while Russia had large supplies in the Caucasus.

But Russia's weakened and increasingly divided government failed to do what Russian governments had traditionally done so well: it failed to mobilize Russia's vast human and military resources effectively enough. Numerous exceptions to conscription, based on education and ethnicity, meant that only 25–30 percent of the young males technically eligible for the draft actually served in the army, in comparison to 80 percent in France and 50 percent in Germany. The Russian government mobilized a smaller percentage of its

population than the other major combatants: *c.*8.8 percent, compared to 12.7 percent in Britain, 19.9 percent in France, and 20.5 percent in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the ending of lifelong recruitment meant that Russian soldiers were no longer as thoroughly socialized into the army's culture as they had been before the mid-nineteenth century. At the upper levels of the officer corps, nobles still set the tone, bringing traditions of amateurishness that undermined the effectiveness of the highly professionalized middle-rank officers, and the well-trained professionals of the General Staff.<sup>8</sup>

Early in the war, the army suffered major defeats, beginning in August 1914 with the battles of Tannenberg (during which the Russian army lost 90,000 prisoners and 122,000 killed and wounded) and the Masurian lakes (in which it lost 45,000 prisoners and 100,000 killed and wounded). In the fall of 1915, German armies advanced into much of eastern Poland and Lithuania. By the end of 1916, after the defeat of a major Russian offensive led by General A. A. Brusilov in June and July, Russia's northwestern borders were pushed back to those of the late seventeenth century. By 1917, 1.7 million soldiers had died, about 8 million had been wounded, and 2.5 million were prisoners of war. Huge casualties removed an entire cohort of experienced soldiers and officers, so that more and more officers and soldiers were hastily trained and poorly disciplined draftees. In its search for conscripts, the government was forced to breach some old taboos, trying to recruit in Central Asia, for example (which generated a huge uprising in 1916), or recruiting family breadwinners.

As the fighting continued, Russia struggled to supply its armies. Russia's railway network was one twelfth as dense as Germany's and one seventh as dense as Austria's, and its main lines were designed to carry grain to the Black Sea rather than to move troops to the empire's western borders. With less productive capacity than its enemies, Russian war industries could not make up fast enough for losses of weapons and equipment, and Russia suffered from a chronic shortage of heavy mortars and high explosive shells. German and Austrian armies together fired 340 million artillery rounds of all calibers during the war, while Russia fired only 50 million, or one seventh as many.<sup>9</sup> The scale and duration of the war turned it into a production contest, one that Russia, facing two more industrialized enemies, was bound to lose in the long run.<sup>10</sup> As early as December 2, 1914, Nicholas II wrote to his wife, Alexandra, that:

The only great and serious difficulty for our army is again the lack of ammunition. Because of that our troops are obliged, while fighting, to be cautious and to economize. This means that the burden of fighting falls on the infantry. As a result our losses are enormous. Some army corps have been reduced to divisions, brigades to companies, et cetera ...<sup>11</sup>

Turkey's entry into the war in October 1914, on the side of the Central Powers, ended any hope of importing allied supplies through the Mediterranean, while the northern supply route through Archangel and Murmansk was closed for much of the year and serviced by one single-track rail line.

The government also failed to mobilize enough cash, because its capacity to exert fiscal pressure had declined since the middle of the nineteenth century.

With the abandonment of redemption payments in 1907, the government lost its traditional grip on rural resources. Increasingly, it had to extract resources from the countryside, using commercial rather than mobilizational levers, and this it was ill-equipped to do. To lure resources from the countryside, the towns would have to supply cheap industrial goods, from nails to plowshares, at a time when industrial production was being diverted to military supplies. The ad hoc methods of autocracy compounded the problem. Nicholas's impulsive decision to introduce prohibition at the start of the war was a fiscal catastrophe.<sup>12</sup> It deprived the government of almost a third of its pre-war revenues; indeed, the Ministry of Finance had originally planned to raise liquor taxes to help pay for the war. It would take at least two years to make up for the fiscal losses caused by prohibition alone.<sup>13</sup> Here is one of many examples of spectacular incompetence at the top of the system. A. I. Shingarev, reporting for the Duma's budgetary and financial commission on August 18, 1915, wrote:

From time immemorial countries waging war have been in want of funds. Revenue has always been sought either by good or by bad measures, by voluntary contributions, by obligatory levies, or by the open confiscation of private property. But never since the dawn of human history has a single country, in time of war, renounced the principal source of its revenue.<sup>14</sup>

Prohibition also meant that peasants no longer had to sell grain to buy liquor. Instead, they ate their surplus grain, or used it to fatten their livestock (an effective way of banking surplus produce). Some peasants even tried distilling their surplus grain to produce "*samogon*" or illicit vodka. In 1914, peasants sent 24 percent of the grain harvest to market. By 1917 they were sending only 15 percent. Yet the army and towns had to be fed, and peasant grain became even more important as production from large commercial farms declined when their agricultural wage workers were drafted into the army. Rather than increasing, the vital exchanges between town and country were declining.

Part of the problem was monetary. The nominal cost of paying for the war rose by almost nine times in just three years, while prohibition and the ending of foreign trade had significantly reduced government income. Short of cash, the government abandoned the gold standard and started printing money. In two and a half years, money supply quadrupled, beginning an inflationary spiral that would end only after the Civil War. All combatant powers used the printing press to pay for war, but the economic and political costs of inflation were greater in a less commercialized economy such as Russia. Those costs were felt most acutely by wage earners, because inflation lowered the real value of wages just when the government needed to attract more labor to its factories. In 1916, the police reported that in the capital (now renamed Petrograd), wages had risen by 100 percent since 1914, while prices had risen by 300 percent.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, inflation would generate dangerous levels of discontent in the major towns and the capital.

The government might have managed industrial unrest if discipline had held amongst garrison troops in the cities. But it did not. In the army as a whole, discipline held up as well as in the other combatant armies, despite large-scale

desertions. The garrison troops, however, consisted largely of poorly trained recruits, or troops recovering from wounds and waiting to be returned to the front, or family breadwinners resentful at having been mobilized after the abolition of laws exempting them from recruitment. Some garrison troops were even industrial workers, being punished for strike activity. A more competent government might have anticipated the military problems such policies would cause in the cities.

Even these challenges might have been manageable if it had not been for one more fatal weakness: widening divisions within Russia's ruling elites. Tsarism finally collapsed when it was abandoned by Russia's civilian and military elites. At the beginning of the war, there was a broad, patriotic consensus, and parliamentary, military, and industrial elites rallied around the Tsar. But military defeats and the government's refusal to negotiate seriously with the Duma majority soon dissipated patriotic enthusiasm and elite unity. Many Duma leaders became convinced that the government's failure to consult with the Duma majority was undermining the war effort by failing to mobilize the immense reserves of military, administrative, and entrepreneurial talent among educated Russians. In 1915, the Tsar made some grudging concessions to the conservative liberals who now dominated the Duma. In May, he allowed the formation of a Central War Industries Committee (WIC) that brought together representatives of industry, workers' organizations, and members of the Duma political elite. By bringing a wider range of expertise and experience to bear on the problem of supplies, the WIC helped improve the management of transportation, fuel supplies, grain supplies, and supplies to the army. The Tsar also allowed the creation of an All-Russian Union of Zemstvo and Municipal Councils (*Zemgor*), which took an active role in tasks such as welfare and dealing with the flood of refugees from occupied regions.<sup>16</sup>

These changes demonstrated the willingness of the country's political elites, and even some of its working-class leaders, to work with the government if it offered them some role in mobilizing the country's resources. But Nicholas feared that by enhancing the Duma's role in the war effort, he might unwittingly create an alternative government. In this way, fears for his own authority limited his willingness to seek better ways of mobilizing for war. As he turned away from the leading forces in the Duma, he began to appoint ministers with a vision as narrow as his own, or to seek advice from unofficial advisers without either skill or insight, such as his wife's favorite, the Siberian monk Rasputin.

After major German advances in the fall of 1915, Nicholas II appointed himself commander-in-chief. Appalled by this decision, some army commanders began to see the Tsar himself as the major barrier to victory. A. A. Brusilov was reported to have said that, if forced to choose between the Tsar and Russia, "I will take Russia."<sup>17</sup> In October, leaders of the Octobrist and Kadet parties formed a "Progressive Bloc," which demanded a "Ministry of Public Confidence," that is to say a ministry chosen from Duma leaders. Soon, this demand was supported by most Duma members. But Nicholas rejected their demands. This ensured that from now on the task of mobilizing the country's military, economic, and even moral resources for war was carried out by a government that lacked the talents, the connections, the experience, and the support of

much of Russia's political, commercial, and even military elite. Without real expertise at the top of the system, unofficial advisers such as Rasputin became increasingly influential. They also became increasingly visible, which further undermined the government's prestige. Like Brusilov, Duma leaders began to fear that they might have to choose between a Tsar whose policies threatened ruin and defeat, and an elite coup that might rally Russian society and generate a more competent government. As in any highly centralized political system, weakness or incompetence at the top undermined the cohesion and power of the entire system.

The dilemma faced by Duma leaders was described well in a famous article written by the liberal politician Vasily Maklakov in September 1915.

Imagine that you are driving in an automobile on a steep and narrow road. One wrong turn of the steering-wheel and you are irretrievably lost. Your dear ones, your beloved mother, are with you in the car. Suddenly you realise that your chauffeur is unable to drive ... should you continue in this way, you face inescapable destruction. Fortunately, there are people in the automobile who can drive, and they should take over the wheel as soon as possible. But it is a difficult and dangerous task to change places with the driver while moving. One second without control and the automobile will crash into the abyss. There is no choice, however, and you make up your mind; but the chauffeur refuses to give way ... he is clinging to the wheel and will not give way to anybody. ... Can one force him? This could easily be done in normal times with an ordinary horse-drawn peasant cart at low speed on level ground. Then it could mean salvation. But can this be done on the steep mountain path? ... One error in taking a turn, or an awkward movement of his hand, and the car is lost. You know that, and he knows it as well ... So you will leave the steering-wheel in the hands of the chauffeur ... And you will be right, for this is what has to be done.<sup>18</sup>

The high stakes magnified the impact of minor crises. In February 1917, cold weather disrupted railway traffic, which cut supplies of fuel and grain to the towns and the capital. Bakeries closed and the government introduced rationing, which prompted panic buying and long food queues. Factories without fuel shut down. Then temperatures rose, and workers went onto the streets to protest. International Women's Day on February 23 coincided with protests against bread shortages. By February 24, the demonstrations were as large as those at the height of the 1905 Revolution. Despite the uncertain discipline of garrison troops, on the evening of the 25th Nicholas ordered them to fire on rioters. Some units obeyed, provoking memories of Bloody Sunday. But most units refused to obey, and by the 27th most of the garrison troops in the capital had mutinied.

The Tsar could surely have ridden out even this crisis if he had the support of military and political leaders, just as he had survived the October 1905 crisis after making concessions to the liberals who dominated Russia's elites. Indeed, units were sent from the front to restore order in the capital. By now, though, Nicholas had exhausted all reserves of support in the army and the Duma. When he prorogued the Duma on February 27, its members stayed in session, illegally. This was an act of revolutionary defiance from a group whose



members would have greatly preferred to support a reformed Tsarist government. Duma members also began to negotiate with the “Soviet,” an institution modeled on the revolutionary Soviets of 1905, which emerged more or less spontaneously on February 27, and immediately acquired authority over the popular uprising and the garrison troops in the capital. On March 1, the Petrograd Soviet issued “Order No. 1,” commanding all military units in the capital to obey only the orders of the Soviet. The order of the Soviet and the defiance of the Duma broke the ties of political and military discipline that had held, so far, despite the strains of war.

Most political and military leaders now decided that Russia’s chances of survival were better without the Tsar. In his memoirs, M. V. Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, reported that in January 1917, General Krymov told Duma members in a private meeting, “The feeling in the army is such that all will greet with joy the news of a coup d’état. It has to come; it is felt at the front. Should you decide to do this, we will support you.”<sup>19</sup> Though troops were sent from the front to suppress the mutiny in the capital, General Alekseev, the commander-in-chief of the army, halted their advance, believing it would exacerbate the crisis. Then, as Eric Lohr writes, on the morning of March 2, Alekseev “conducted something close to a *coup d’état*, sending a circular to the leading army commanders making the case for Nicholas to abdicate.”<sup>20</sup> The generals agreed with Alekseev. Faced with a united front of his commanding generals, Nicholas caved in. He agreed to abdicate on the same day, March 2.

What if? This analysis suggests that, despite the strains of the war, the breakdown was political. It arose from a split within Russia’s elites that could have been avoided. If Nicholas had shown slightly more flexibility, if he had persisted with the political compromises he was edging towards in the middle of 1915, if he had collaborated more closely with Russia’s military and political elites by appointing a “Ministry of Public Confidence,” he would not have been alone in the crisis of February 1917, Duma and army leaders would surely have helped suppress riots in the capital, and the system might have held, as it did in 1905 after the publication of the October Manifesto. Cooperation with the Duma would have allowed the appointment of more competent officials to key ministries, better decision making in general, and perhaps a durable military stalemate on the eastern front until the military tide turned on Germany’s western front. The Russian mobilizational system would have made a significant first step towards a more collaborative, if not yet fully democratic, system of government, by incorporating within the mobilizational system more of the expertise and influence of Russia’s intellectual, political, military, and business leaders. And after the war, the rapid growth rates of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century might well have resumed. Paul Gregory argues that:

Because barriers to growth would have continued to disappear, Russian growth would likely have accelerated. If this insight is correct, Russian growth over the next half century (1913–1963) would have exceeded the rates recorded for the period 1885–1913.<sup>21</sup>

In the real world, the monarchy's collapse broke the old mobilizational system.

## 1917: FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER

The abdication of Nicholas II on March 2, like the death of Khan Mongke in 1259 or Tsar Fedor in 1598, released the catch holding together a tightly coiled piece of machinery. With the Tsar gone, the system sprang apart. As Eric Lohr writes:

The regime change itself was the single most important cause of the series of events that led to the disintegration of the state and the army, the agrarian revolution and the emergence of minority nationalist movements. With the loss of the tsar as the symbolic centre of authority and loyalty, little held the empire together.<sup>22</sup>

## THE FIRST HALF OF 1917: UNRAVELING AND THE DIVIDE BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT

Nicholas II abdicated on March 2, handing power to his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail, rather than to his own son, the hemophiliac Alexis. A day later, on March 3, Grand Duke Mikhail accepted the advice of Duma leaders that he, too, should abdicate. He handed power to the Provisional Committee of the Duma, "until the Constituent Assembly ... shall by its decision on the form of government express the will of the people." In practice, that left power in the hands of the Duma's Provisional Committee and the Petrograd Soviet, an odd couple of institutions that represented, together, most sections of the ruling elite, and claimed to represent the entire population of the empire. The Provisional Committee of the Duma became the new government. It retained a degree of legitimacy because the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich transferred power to it in his own act of abdication. But it remained "provisional," as it was expected to be replaced after the meeting of a Constituent Assembly.

In this way, the shadow government that Nicholas had feared in 1915 became the real government. Its first leader was Prince G. E. L'vov (1861–1925), a *zemstvo* leader and one of the country's wealthiest landowners. Alexander Guchkov, a businessman and the leader of the Octobrists, became Minister of War, while another industrialist, A. I. Konovalov (1875–1948), became Minister of Trade and Industry. Paul Miliukov, the historian and leader of the Kadets, became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and A. F. Kerenskii (1881–1970), a lawyer and socialist, became Minister of Justice. The members of the new government represented the key groups within Russia's upper classes: the landed nobility, the business elite, the liberal intelligentsia, and the radical, socialist intelligentsia.

However, real power over the garrison troops in the capital was held, not by the Provisional Government, but by the Soviet, whose authority was accepted by most of the soldiers and workers of working-class Petrograd. The Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet occupied opposite wings of the Tauride palace, which had been built in the late eighteenth century by

Catherine the Great's former lover, Grigorii Potemkin. Alexander Kerenskii, a leader of the moderate left-wing *Trudovik* group, and one of the few politicians who belonged to both the Duma and the Petrograd Soviet, shuttled between the palace's two wings as the two institutions searched for common ground. These frantic negotiations, between groups whose ideologies seemed poles apart, demonstrate the underlying desire for unity of all Russia's educated groups, despite the polarization of elite opinion. On March 6, the two bodies agreed that the Provisional Committee of the Duma would form a new government, on condition that it grant civil rights similar to those of the Liberation program of 1905. The socialists who dominated the Soviet agreed to support what they all saw as a "bourgeois" government, mainly because, like most socialists, they believed that Russia lacked the preconditions for socialism. Instead, most of the socialists in the Soviet expected a longish period of bourgeois rule, during which they would act as a sort of loyal opposition.

In this way there emerged a hybrid ruling structure that came to be known as "Dual Power." This, too, was a sort of *smychka*, but an awkward and unstable one. Briefly, the new government enjoyed almost universal support, as it issued legislation embodying many of the reforms demanded during the 1905 Revolution. It promised to summon a Constituent Assembly, and granted universal, equal suffrage to men and women, along with full civil rights. The anti-autocratic liberal reforms launched in the first weeks of its existence reflected the anti-authoritarian mood of the period, but they made little political sense in a society with little experience of democracy, and in the middle of a cruel and debilitating war. In a declaration of April 26, the new government announced that government should henceforth be based on consent, not coercion. It granted freedom of religion and the press, abolished the Tsarist system of provincial governors, transferring their power to the elected *zemstva*, and replaced the Tsarist local police with local militia. In May, it announced that elections would be held in November for a Constituent Assembly. These simple measures dismantled much of the coercive and administrative machinery of the Tsarist mobilizational system. Without that machinery, the new government found it lacked the power to handle the daunting mobilizational challenges it faced. Whether it was to fulfill the radical goals of its left wing, or to prosecute the war more effectively, as its right wing hoped, it would need to be able to mobilize significant power, authority, and resources behind a clear program, and it no longer had the means to do so.

Despite the temporary show of unity, experienced politicians understood the extent of the divisions within Russian society. As one liberal politician put it in his memoirs:

Officially we celebrated, we praised the revolution, shouted "hurrah" to the fighters for freedom, wrapped ourselves with red bunting and marched under red flags ... We all said "we," "our" revolution, "our" victory, and "our" freedom. But inside, in our solitary discussions, we were horrified, we shuddered, and felt ourselves to be prisoners of inimical elements moving along some sort of uncharted path.<sup>23</sup>

Deep divisions of class, culture, and ethnicity that had once been bridged by the locking mechanism of a disciplined elite class now opened with terrifying speed. M. T. Florinsky, a Russian historian who fought during the war, writes:

The conflict between the attitude of the masses and that of the educated classes ... was fundamental, insoluble, fatal ... There was no room for compromise between the two points of view, and the conflict had to be fought out to its bitter end.<sup>24</sup>

Though obscured for a time by nationalism, war, and the rhetoric of democratization, the ancient divide between mobilizers and mobilizees became all too apparent in 1917. There was no single platform that could generate a shared commitment linking Russia's old elite groups with the mass of the rural and urban population. In November, the Kadet scientist Vladimir Vernadskii wrote in his diary: "It is a tragic situation. ... It is clear that unrestrained democracy, the pursuit of which I set as the goal of my life, requires corrections."<sup>25</sup> Yet the delegitimization of traditional forms of authoritarian rule meant that each group had to act as if it sought a broad, democratic support base. And curiously, the very search for supporters often mobilized constituencies with very different aims. As Peter Holquist puts it:

Russia's political class had imposed a democratic and elective political structure on a highly fractured political field. The institutions it had summoned into being thus became the vehicles for expressing and mobilizing existing social divisions and new political ones, rather than overcoming them.<sup>26</sup>

Not until late in 1917 would an increasing number of political groups begin to admit, frankly, that they could not possibly represent the whole of society because divisions ran so deep. The Bolsheviks were the first political party to say publicly that they had no intention of trying to represent all classes. Lenin said it as early as April 1917, in the "April Theses," in what was much more than a mere tactical move. Lenin had always been exceptionally optimistic about the possibilities for a popular uprising.<sup>27</sup> But it is a sign of the reluctance of elite groups to admit these realities that it took the bullying pressure of Lenin to force such policies even on the radical intellectuals who dominated the Bolshevik party.

The deep class divisions became apparent within two months of the Tsar's abdication. Members of the Soviet, aware of the war weariness of working-class Russians, and committed to improving the living conditions of workers and peasants, saw the change of government as an opportunity to negotiate an end to the war, and launch fundamental social and economic reforms. But members of the Provisional Government saw the revolution as a chance to prosecute the war more effectively and with renewed energy. In late April, Miliukov, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced that the government intended to continue the war until it could achieve a "just peace." His announcement provoked massive demonstrations in the capital, and he and his ally, Guchkov, the Minister of War, were forced to resign.

Now discipline began to break down in the army. At the front, rank-and-file troops began to act as if the Soviet's Order No. 1 applied to the entire army rather than just to garrison troops. They began to debate, and sometimes reject, the orders of their officers if they seemed to conflict with those of the Soviet. They also began to elect their own Soviets. The abolition of the death penalty at the front further undermined the chain of military command. Officers led attacks with no certainty that their troops would follow them. Meanwhile, freedom of the press allowed anti-war parties, including the Bolsheviks, to circulate anti-war propaganda at the front. A second Brusilov offensive, between June 18 and mid-July, had some initial success but soon broke down. Kerenskii, who became Prime Minister on July 8, reinstated the death penalty under pressure from his new commander-in-chief, Kornilov. Desertions increased and the army began to dissolve, though, as always, discipline held best at the front line.

Fissures also appeared in the towns and factories, in the countryside and far from the center. Though factory discipline was essential to the war effort, the momentum of revolution and the demands of the Soviet forced the Provisional Government to make significant concessions to labor. It granted an 8-hour day and recognized the right to form factory committees that could negotiate on behalf of workers. Factory owners were appalled as they lost control over their own factories. Konovalov, the Minister of Trade and Industry and himself a successful industrialist, argued in May:

When we overthrew the old regime we believed absolutely that freedom would bring about a great expansion of the productive forces of the country. Now it is not a question of thinking about developing productive forces, but of making every effort to protect [industry] ... from total ruin. And if the confused minds do not see reason soon, if people do not realise that they are sawing off the branch they are sitting on, if the leaders of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies do not manage to control the movement and to guide it into the channels of legitimate class struggle, then scores and hundreds of enterprises will close down. We shall experience the complete paralysis of national life and shall embark upon a long period of irreparable economic disaster when millions will be unemployed, without bread, without a home, and when the crisis will affect one branch of the economy after the other, bringing with it everywhere death, devastation, and misery, partly ending credit and producing financial crises and everyone's ruin.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, workers found that whatever promises the new government had made, it was too weak to defend their interests. It was no more able than the Tsarist government to reduce inflation. Prices rose from 300 percent of the 1914 level in January 1917 to 755 percent by October.<sup>29</sup> Supplies remained precarious. The new government had to introduce rationing, and by autumn it was sending armed detachments to requisition food from the countryside.

In the villages, peasants sensed the government's loosening grip on the land and demanded the land redistribution they had dreamed of for decades. In contrast, their landlords expected the new government to protect property rights. Having dismantled much of the traditional apparatus of government, the Provisional Government could satisfy neither of these contradictory

demands, even if it had had the will and unity needed to do so. It evaded the problem by postponing consideration of land redistribution until the election of a Constituent Assembly in November. Most peasants were unwilling to wait, and in April they began seizing landlords' land. Having replaced the police with local militias, the government could do little to stop land seizures. In March, officials reported disorders in 34 districts; in April, in 174; and in July, in 325. Most land was seized just before the spring or autumn sowing. Peasants would meet together, often at a local church, and move off with whatever weapons they could find to take over the land they wanted and appropriate stored grain and livestock. Local landlords or their agents often fled. If not, they were often forced to sign documents handing over much of their property. Orlando Figes cites an account of land seizures in early 1918 from the Saratov provincial land department:

Yesterday, 26 January, at 12 noon the entire commune of Kolybelka, led by the chairman of the village committee, appeared at my *khutor*. They arrested me and my family, as well as two policemen who happened to be at my house, and left a guard with us with a warning not to go out of the house. They also placed armed guards around my farm and made threats to my labourers. Then they took away all my grain and seed, except 40 *pud* of rye, and locked up my barns. I asked them to weigh the grain they had taken, but they refused as they loaded up their 56 carts until they were overflowing.<sup>30</sup>

Landlords despaired of the government's ability or willingness to protect their rights. Their worst fears were confirmed when, in May, the Socialist Revolutionary leader Victor Chernov, a long-time advocate of land redistribution, became Minister of Agriculture.

It was increasingly apparent that a government attempting to represent all classes could not defend any, because of the deep divisions between mobilizers and mobilizees within the class *smychka* of Russia's traditional mobilizational system. Where one group wanted to defend traditional property rights while the other wanted to overthrow them, where one group wanted to continue the war while another wanted to end it, where one group sought stricter industrial discipline while the other sought workers' control, where one group wanted to hold the empire together while the other wanted to let it fall apart, there could be no middle ground, and any party that acted as if there was had to adopt contradictory or ineffective policies that eventually alienated everyone. In 1917, the same dilemma appeared many times and in many different guises. To support the war was to alienate a war-weary soldiery, while to propose ending the war prompted accusations of treachery from the country's upper classes. As Ronald Suny puts it, "*Nadklassnost'* (the Kadet notion of standing above class considerations) was simply a utopian stance in a Russia that was pulling apart along class lines."<sup>31</sup>

Without the central rivet of autocracy, the empire also fractured along ethnic and national faultlines. According to the 1897 census, Great Russians (a category that does not include Ukrainian and Belarussian speakers) made up just 45 percent of the empire. Within Russia itself, the empire also included

Jews, Germans, and Finnic-speaking communities; in the west, Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, as well as Finns; in the Caucasus it included Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Circassians, Chechen, and other, smaller national groups. In the Urals and western Siberia could be found Bashkirs, Tatars, Kalmyk; in Central Asia, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz (though national differences in this region were not as clearly defined as they would become in the Soviet era); and, in Siberia, Mongols and Buriats as well as many smaller indigenous nations.

By early 1917, German armies had occupied Poland, Lithuania, and parts of Belarus and Latvia, cutting them off from the empire and allowing national movements to flourish. In Kiev, an Executive Committee claimed to represent the Provisional Government, while a Kiev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies represented the left. There also appeared a third institution, the Central "Rada" or Council, formed by liberal and socialist nationalists on March 4, and presided over by the historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky. The Rada soon became the most important institution in Ukraine, and in June it demanded Ukrainian autonomy. In Siberia, there appeared among the Russian population the same loose structures of Soviets and government officials as in Russia, as well as *zemstva*, which had never existed before in Siberia. There also emerged a movement for Siberian autonomy, formed at a meeting in Tomsk on October 1.<sup>32</sup>

## THE SECOND HALF OF 1917: BREAKDOWN OF THE CENTER

In the second half of 1917, the mobilizational system cobbled together early in 1917 fell apart with terrifying speed.

The Bolshevik party was the first to publicly abandon the democratic fiction of *nadklassnost'*, a government of all classes. Resident in Switzerland during the war, Lenin negotiated with the German government to return to Petrograd through enemy territory. He arrived at Petrograd's Finland station on April 3. In the "April Theses," which he rammed through the party immediately after his return, the Bolsheviks announced that they opposed the war, rejected the Provisional Government, envisaged a rapid transition beyond the bourgeois stage of the revolution to the formation of a government of workers' and peasants' Soviets, and intended to abolish private property in the land. The Bolsheviks seemed to be the first party to take their socialist slogans seriously, and that would win them much support in 1917. Lenin's extremism and his customary optimism about the possibilities of a popular revolution in Russia would enable the Bolsheviks to outflank Russia's moderate socialists.<sup>33</sup>

On the right, conservative groups also abandoned the idea of an all-class government, committing instead to the defense of property, continued prosecution of the war, and political and national stabilization. Both left-wing and right-wing groups could mobilize significant support, and it is tempting to think that either might have won the contest in 1917, given some luck and the political skills needed to survive the political equivalent of a rodeo. If the right had succeeded, the revolutionary breakdown might have ended, like the "Time of Troubles," with a restoration, perhaps even a restoration of

the Romanov dynasty, along with the aristocratic, commercial, military, and official elites that had been its traditional supporters. In the event, though, both skill and fortune favored the far left, which is why the Bolsheviks, a party few took seriously in February 1917, were ruling the country a year later.

For most of 1917, centrist politicians such as Kerenskii dominated the Provisional Government and continued to argue for a government of both Russia's *nizy*, or lower classes, and its *verkhi*, its former elites. This was like trying to straddle an earthquake. As divisions widened, the government found it no longer had any political ground to stand on.

In May, after the resignation of Kadet and Octobrist members of the Provisional Government, Kerenskii became Minister for War, and the Socialist Revolutionary leader Victor Chernov became Minister for Agriculture. In June, Kerenskii tried to hold the army together by reinstating the death penalty. He also launched a huge and initially successful offensive on the Galician front under General Brusilov. On July 8, after the offensive had broken down and the Prime Minister, Prince L'vov, had resigned, Kerenskii became Prime Minister. Just before this, during the "July Days" (July 3–7), radical supporters of the Bolsheviks had pushed them into attempting a coup, against the advice of Lenin and most other Bolshevik leaders. Kerenskii arrested as many Bolshevik leaders as he could, and accused Lenin of treachery for accepting German money to reach Petrograd. Lenin fled into hiding across the nearby Finnish border.

To understand the chaotic and complex events of the next three months, it may help to focus on two key aspects of the crisis. The first is the remobilization of both the right and the left behind more "*étatist*" approaches to rule that are reminiscent of Russia's traditional political culture; the second is the pivotal role of leadership.

## MOBILIZATION BEHIND A STRONG STATE

As the political ground vanished beneath the Provisional Government, politicians to the left and right began to argue for more centralized and coercive methods of rule. Once again, ancient traditions of elite discipline and strong government revived in a time of crisis.

These tendencies were magnified by the challenge of total war, which encouraged more *étatist* approaches to rule in all combatant governments. Fighting the war meant mobilizing people, money, and supplies fast and on a huge scale, and market forces could not do the job fast enough. Increasingly, the demands of mobilization trumped those of economic efficiency. So all combatant governments tried to increase their power and reach in order to keep large armies in the field and well supplied. The trend towards stronger governments with greater mobilizational reach would outlive the war and shape much of the history of the twentieth century. Soviet experiments with planning, in both the Civil War and the 1930s, were modeled in part on the direct mobilizational methods of war-time Germany.<sup>34</sup> And, though the Soviet state would take these trends to exceptional lengths, state power would increase in



all the world's major powers. In the late nineteenth century, the French government, which accounted for some 15 percent of French GDP, seemed a juggernaut. At the same time, the UK and US governments accounted for only about 10 percent of GDP in their respective countries.<sup>35</sup> A century later, in the early twenty-first century, the average share of government expenditure in the countries of the OECD was 45 percent of GDP, with some spending well over 50 percent. Even the US government accounted for about 40 percent of US GDP.

In Russia, these trends would eventually go further than anywhere else. In most European combatant nations, institutional and economic structures checked the growth of state power once the intense pressures of making war had ended. But in Russia, *étatist* approaches to governance had a broader appeal and deeper cultural roots, and faced less resistance than in societies where capitalism had made greater inroads.<sup>36</sup> And there was widespread disillusionment with liberal ideals. The *zemstva*, independent courts, and political parties introduced in the late nineteenth century had proved ineffective as instruments of rule, so even Russian liberals retained a traditional faith in the importance of the state. As Holquist argues,

There existed a strong current of statism within Russian society itself, an ethos conditioned by the lack of prewar institutions, strengthened by the war experience, and infused with new urgency by the collapse of tsarism. The entire political class shared a common transformatory agenda to create a new society through the power of the state. The Bolshevik program for conflating state and society thus mapped onto an important preexisting current in Russian political culture.<sup>37</sup>

The Russian word *gosudarstvennost'* captures these attitudes well, though it has no easy translation into English. Literally, it means something like “stateness” or “statehood.” In practice, it hints at statehood as a form of social being that can be present or absent, and when present is associated with strength, stability, security, and prosperity. It has largely positive overtones, so it means much more than *gosudarstvo*, or “state,” which implies merely a neutral institutional framework to contain social and class competition.

Officials in the Russian state bureaucracy had long held an almost mythic faith in the efficacy of the state. Educated society also came to idolize the state as an ideal in its own right and an instrument for achieving all its own fondest dreams. Opponents of the autocracy often looked to the state not simply as a tool of repression but also as the only available instrument for overcoming backwardness. The struggle, therefore, was less between “state and society” than between autocracy and society over how best to employ the state to transform Russian reality.<sup>38</sup>

Growing support for a strong state was apparent even before the February revolution. It is particularly clear in the politics of grain supply, where market forces had proved to be ineffective mobilizers. Most officials charged with maintaining food supplies to the army and the cities came to share a hostility to market forces, and an increasing attraction to planning. Many would bring those commitments to their work during the Civil War, on whatever side they

found themselves.<sup>39</sup> As early as August 1916, officials of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture argued that the government should take over the grain trade, the most fundamental of all exchanges between Russia's cities and its villages.

The war has advanced the social life of the state [*sotsial'nyiuzhizn' gosudarstva*] as the dominant principle, in relation to which all other manifestations of civil life must be subordinated ... Germany's military-economic practice, which is the most intensive in the world conflict, shows how far this process of *étatisation* [*ogosudarstvleniie*] can proceed ... All these state measures related to the war ... represent a hitherto under-appreciated foundation for the systematic construction of future domestic and foreign trade ... The state cannot allow grain to remain a circumstance of free trade.<sup>40</sup>

These ideas survived the collapse of the autocracy. As early as March 25, 1917, the Provisional Government instituted a grain monopoly and set compulsory prices for grain sales. But enforcement was half-hearted and ineffective. Six months later, on October 16, the new (socialist) Minister of Food Supply, Prokopovich, declared:

We must cease our attempts at persuasion ... a shift to compulsion is now absolutely necessary. ... [W]ithout this shift we will not be able to save either the cause of our homeland or the cause of our revolution.

Working together, the Ministries of War, Internal Affairs, and Food Supply began to consider sending out armed detachments to ensure that towns and workers could be fed.<sup>41</sup> On the issue of state control over grain supplies, Bolshevik policies would differ little from those of the Provisional Government, and under the Bolsheviks many food-supply officials simply carried on as they had before the October revolution. The main difference was that the Bolsheviks implemented the same policies more ruthlessly, more systematically, and with less restraint.

Alerted by the attempted Bolshevik coup during the "July Days" to the danger of a left-wing uprising, liberals and conservatives began to argue openly for more discipline and less democracy. In August, the industrialist Riabushinskii borrowed the language of socialist parties to argue that the Russian state was indeed "bourgeois," so that its leaders should "think in a bourgeois manner and act in a bourgeois manner."<sup>42</sup> What did this mean in practice? In September, the American journalist John Reed was told, "What Russia needs is a Strong Man. We should get our minds off the Revolution now and concentrate on the Germans."<sup>43</sup> In August, the socialist Minister of Labor Skobelev announced it was the duty of every worker "to devote all his strength to intensive labour and not lose a minute of working time."<sup>44</sup>

Such comments suggest that there was taking place a sort of regathering of traditional elites across political lines. Given skillful leadership, a conservative "bourgeois" government might have emerged, representing the remnants of Russia's former political, industrial, and intellectual elites. After all, most of

the experience of government, of administration, and of economic management lay with the country's traditional elites. The rapid formation of White armies during the Civil War points to the same conclusion: all the preconditions existed for rebuilding the ancient elite traditions of cohesion and unity as in 1612. But organizing a government of any kind under the conditions of 1917 would prove a complex challenge, and no right-wing leader emerged with the necessary political skills.

Some thought that General L. G. Kornilov, whom Kerenskii appointed commander-in-chief on July 16, might fit the bill. He gained an enthusiastic upper-class following, including support from the influential Union of Army and Navy Officers. He held talks with leading financiers, and began to talk of restoring discipline not just at the front but also in the rear. On August 25, he began moving troops towards the capital to restore discipline, and refused to back down when Kerenskii ordered him to halt. Kornilov's coup was almost as poorly thought through as the July uprising of the Bolsheviks. Trains carrying troops were diverted into sidings by anti-Kornilov railway workers, and as the troops hung about on railway platforms, they were harangued by socialist orators. Most soldiers decided they wanted no part in a coup against the Soviets, an institution that most soldiers supported. By September 1, Kornilov's "coup" was over. According to Trotsky, Alekseev, the former chief-of-staff, said that Kornilov had "a lion's heart and the brains of a sheep."<sup>45</sup>

By October, military discipline had broken down, the government could no longer protect landed property in the countryside or industrial property in the cities, or control the peripheries of the empire, or supply food to the towns. Industrial discipline hardly existed, the Provisional Government had lost the respect of both the right and the left, and the country seemed headed for anarchy. The right would mobilize once again during the Civil War, but by then it had lost the political and military initiative to its opponents, the Bolsheviks. The right had also lost the country's industrial and agricultural heartland.

## OCTOBER, AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

In the months before October, few, even within the Bolshevik party, would have confidently predicted the emergence of a strong left-wing government from the revolutionary maelstrom. In March 1917, the Bolsheviks made up only 40 of the 1,500 or so members of the Petrograd Soviet. They seemed utterly insignificant, and most Bolshevik leaders in the capital accepted the socialist consensus that Russia was not ready for a socialist revolution. A year later the Bolsheviks would negotiate a peace treaty with Germany. How, in such a short period, did such an unlikely group of revolutionaries form a government that would rebuild a disciplined ruling group and a strong state, and rule most of Inner Eurasia for more than 70 years?

Part of the answer is that Russia's traditional political elites had failed to unite effectively in support of a strong government. And part of the answer is that the Bolsheviks *did* unite effectively, under the skillful leadership of Lenin. As Oleg Khlevniuk argues, most historians would probably accept that without Lenin, there would have been no October revolution.<sup>46</sup> In a society in political,

economic, and military free fall, the ability to improvise, to see unexpected political opportunities, and to maneuver quickly and decisively really mattered. So did a bit of luck.

When Lenin first returned from exile on April 3, 1917, even the Bolshevik leaders in the capital, including Stalin, expected a long period of bourgeois rule. They accepted the view of most European socialists that, though the preconditions for socialism might exist in the more advanced capitalist societies of Europe and the West, such as Germany, they did not yet exist in the Russian Empire. In contrast Lenin argued that a Russian revolution, however premature, could trigger a worldwide revolution. This scenario justified a much more ambitious and radical program that offered no compromise with Russia's elites, the "bourgeoisie." In the "April Theses," Lenin argued that Russia's industrial workers, soldiers, and peasants should seize power in their own right, igniting a global explosion that would allow the building of socialist societies throughout the world. Their commitment to an imminent world socialist revolution gave the Bolsheviks a revolutionary élan and optimism that other socialist parties lacked. It attracted broad working-class support, and also attracted other radical socialists such as Trotsky, who had made similar arguments since as early as 1905. By May, most factory committees in Petrograd supported the Bolshevik program, and so did most sailors of the Kronstadt naval base, as well as increasing numbers of soldiers at the front. On July 3, as we have seen, pro-Bolshevik military units in the capital forced the party to attempt a coup, and the party was crushed, as Lenin had feared it would be. However, just two months later, Kornilov's right-wing coup failed equally spectacularly, leaving the right in disarray. By September governmental structures were so weak that small forces could tip the balance either way.

In early September, just after the failure of Kornilov's coup, Lenin, who was still hiding over the border in Finland, demanded that Bolshevik leaders start preparing for a coup. Now was the time, he argued, because the party's popularity was rising fast among the armed forces, on the railways, and in the factories, while the Petrograd Soviet was supported by most working-class Russians, including the Bolshevik paramilitary "Red Guards." When the Bolsheviks won majorities on the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets in September, this gave them new legitimacy as leaders of the working classes, at least in the major cities. With an eye to socialist legitimacy, Lenin also hoped that an uprising might force the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, due to meet on October 25, to take power in the name of Russia's working classes.

As Robert Daniels has argued, in a curious sense, the October revolution was triggered by another botched coup from the right.<sup>47</sup> On October 23, Kerenskii, aware of Bolshevik preparations for a coup, ordered soldiers to close the Bolshevik military paper. Like Nicholas's order to shoot on demonstrators in February, this prompted a mutiny of garrison troops. The Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Soviet, formed to defend the Soviet against a right-wing coup, was now dominated by Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, who had joined the party in July. It was based at Smolny,

a former girls' school, and now the headquarters of the Petrograd Soviet. John Reed captured vividly the frenetic atmosphere in Smolny during these crucial days.

The massive façade of Smolny blazed with lights as we drove up, and from every street converged upon it streams of hurrying shapes dim in the gloom. Automobiles and motor-cycles came and went; an enormous elephant-coloured armoured automobile, with two red flags flying from the turret, lumbered out with a screaming siren. It was cold, and at the outer gate the red Guards had built themselves a bonfire. At the inner gate, too, there was a blaze, by the light of which sentries slowly spelled out our passes and looked us up and down. ... [Inside] The long, bare, dimly illuminated halls roared with the thunder of feet, calling, shouting ... A crowd came pouring down the staircase, workers in black blouses and round black fur hats, many of them with guns slung over their shoulders, soldiers in rough dirt-coloured coats and grey fur *shapki* pinched flat, a leader or so – Lunacharskii, Kameniev – hurrying along in the centre of a group all talking at once, with harassed anxious faces, and bulging portfolios under their arms.<sup>48</sup>

In response to Kerenskii's order, the MRC ordered garrison troops to defend the Soviet by seizing the capital's communication hubs: bridges, railway stations, the post office, and the telephone exchange. Then they were ordered to attack the Provisional Government's headquarters in the Winter Palace. Pro-Soviet troops stormed the palace on the evening of October 26 and, though Kerenskii escaped, the Bolshevik-led Soviet now controlled the capital.

Moderate socialists attending the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets were appalled. Even among the Bolsheviks many still hoped to form a government based on a broad left-wing coalition. Lenin was spared the embarrassment of having to compromise with moderate socialists when most Mensheviks and right-wing Socialist Revolutionaries walked out of the Congress of Soviets in protest at the storming of the Winter Palace. Trotsky famously consigned them to "the dustbin of history."

The Congress of Soviets was now dominated by a coalition of Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs). It issued a series of foundational decrees proposed by the Bolsheviks. These announced an end to the war and abolished "landlord ownership of land." The decree on land, issued on October 26, declared that "Private ownership of land shall be abolished forever; land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated."<sup>49</sup> The Congress also assumed power by establishing a "Soviet of People's Commissars," headed by Lenin and including both Bolsheviks and Left SRs. The new government claimed authority over all local government institutions. It also announced the right of all subject peoples to secede, a measure which, like the decree on land, implied that the government had much more control over events than they really had. The Soviet government lacked formal legitimacy, governmental experience, a bureaucracy, a financial system, and a disciplined army. But what it had was a strong and purposeful leader, a high degree of unity, and a simple program that could attract broad popular support even in the army, which now constituted the most powerful coercive institution in the country even as it disintegrated. In a society in political free fall, these were

powerful levers. Finally, the new government faced enemies that were weaker and even more divided than itself.

In many other cities of the Russian Empire, the balance of local forces was similar to that in Petrograd. In town after town, local coups were organized on the Petrograd model, and power in the towns, like forts in the steppes, was the key to power in the country as a whole. The transfer of power was particularly smooth where the industrial working class was dominant and reasonably homogeneous, as in the Central Industrial Region or the Urals. Where urban populations were larger and more diverse, as in Moscow or Smolensk or some of the large towns on the Volga, there was often more conflict before local military revolutionary committees established their authority with the support of local troops. In less industrial towns the local Bolsheviks often faced opposition from moderate socialists.<sup>50</sup> In Petrograd itself, there were skirmishes when Kerenskii tried unsuccessfully to use Cossack units to suppress the October uprising.

The countryside was a different story. Here, most peasants supported the pro-peasant Socialist Revolutionaries, who consequently gained a majority of votes for the Constituent Assembly when elections were finally held in December. But though most people lived in the villages, the towns were the key to power. From the start, the Bolsheviks showed they were willing to enforce discipline ruthlessly where it was possible and necessary. In the capital, they shut down opposition newspapers. In December, they created a special police agency, the Cheka, or “All-Russian Commission for Suppression of Counter-Revolution, Sabotage, and Speculation.” Though extremely weak, the Bolsheviks had just enough authority over the army for the Germans to negotiate an armistice with them in December.

As the Bolsheviks consolidated their grip on the key strategic points – the capital, the army, and the major cities – their conservative opponents, having lost the political initiative, left the capital and gravitated towards the Don Cossack region, where they had friends. The Cossack Ataman Kaledin invited members of the Provisional Government to gather in order to overthrow the Bolsheviks, and in this way, the Don Cossack territory became the “Russian Vendée,” the mustering point for the first serious anti-Bolshevik armies.<sup>51</sup> Those who took up Kaledin’s invitation formed a motley coalition. They included the former commander-in-chief, General Alekseev, as well as Generals Denikin and Kornilov, many Kadets, including Miliukov, Struve, and Shingarev, and a former SR revolutionary and terrorist, Boris Savinkov. Here, with the Don Cossacks, they began to form an anti-Bolshevik “Volunteer” army. Divisions within the Kadets ensured the rapid collapse of Kaledin’s government, and Kaledin shot himself in despair on January 29, 1918. In February, pro-Soviet forces occupied Rostov and Novocherkassk. Then, in April, an anti-Soviet insurgency backed by German forces overthrew the Soviet regime on Cossack territory and a new Don Cossack government, the “All-Great Don Host,” emerged under Ataman Krasnov. Now the Don Cossack region would become the base for a major anti-Bolshevik movement. Many hoped to repeat the achievements of Minin and Pozharskii by creating a national army that would rid the country of the alien forces of Bolshevism.

## *A CONTEST TO BUILD A NEW ORDER: CIVIL WAR, 1918–1921*

The armies that fought the Civil War had one foot in the organic energy era and the other in the fossil fuels era. Cavalry armies dominated the fighting, as they had during the Mongol conquest of Rus' almost 700 years earlier. But railways speeded the movement of armies, weapons, and supplies, and machine guns dominated many battlefields. Each side made a point of eliminating local elites when it seized new territory, and the eventual Bolshevik victory prompted a mass exodus of the former landlord class, most entrepreneurs, most liberal politicians, and many military leaders. How the Bolsheviks built a new and exceptionally powerful mobilizational machine in the chaos of civil war is a remarkable if brutal story. This is not the time to tell that story in detail. Instead, we focus on some of the crucial steps in the construction of rival mobilizational machines, only one of which would survive the Civil War.

### CIVIL WAR

That the Bolsheviks would make few concessions to democratic principle became clear early in January 1918, when they ordered troops to disperse the Constituent Assembly, which was elected in December and met on January 5 in the Tauride Palace. The Bolsheviks had only 24 percent of the 703 delegates, while their main socialist rivals, the Socialist Revolutionaries, had 40 percent. The closing of the Constituent Assembly persuaded even many socialists to take up arms against the Bolsheviks.

On January 28, the government, which had vowed to defend itself with volunteer militias, announced the formation of a more traditional "Workers-Peasants' Red Army." It had little choice, as its enemies and rivals were also beginning to mobilize real armies. In December, Finland declared independence, and in Ukraine an elected Rada declared independence and negotiated a peace treaty with Germany. Troops supporting the Rada were soon fighting pro-Bolshevik forces, but in Ukraine, divisions between Russians and Ukrainian nationalists, both seeking the support of a large peasant class whose support went mostly to the Socialist Revolutionaries, made for a peculiarly chaotic situation. In April 1918, German forces established a puppet regime in Ukraine under "Hetman" Skoropadsky, which survived only until the end of the year. In Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, an anti-Bolshevik Transcaucasian government appeared in November, only to split early in 1918 into separate national governments. In Ufa, in the heart of Bashkiria, a gathering of Muslim nationalists debated the prospects for Muslim autonomy, and established Islamic ministries of religion, education, and finance. The Soviet government was at first sympathetic to notions of pan-Islamic autonomy, and created a special Commissariat of Muslim Affairs.<sup>52</sup>

In late 1917 and early 1918, the German army posed the most dangerous threat to the Bolsheviks. But German terms for a peace settlement were so harsh that in February Trotsky, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs,

announced grandly that his government would accept “neither war nor peace.” The Germans called his bluff and resumed their advance on Petrograd. They faced no significant opposition. Ever the realist, Lenin persuaded his colleagues to accept even harsher terms at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on March 3. The Bolsheviks surrendered the Baltic provinces, Poland, Georgia, Finland, and much of Ukraine. They abandoned most of the territory Russia had conquered in the west since the seventeenth century, along with about 60 million people, 2 million sq. kilometers of territory, and something like one third of the empire’s agricultural production. On March 12, to avoid the danger of a sudden German advance, the Bolsheviks moved their capital back to Moscow, where it has stayed ever since. At the seventh Party Congress in early March, they renamed the party the “Communist Party.” The Left SRs left the coalition with the Bolsheviks on March 19, leaving the Bolsheviks in sole control of the government and free of any need to compromise with other parties.

In the months after October, military conflicts were confused and, apart from German units, were fought by small, undisciplined militia armies. But both sides began to recruit troops and mobilize resources by force. In the Don Cossack region, the Don army commander proclaimed:

Today a punitive detachment is being dispatched by steamboat from Razdory to Starocherkasskaia, in order, by force of arms, to put an end to the harmful propaganda and to force the deluded [Cossacks] to come to the defense of their native region at this critical moment. ... [T]he campaign ataman has ordered me to warn that any deviation or demonstration of neutrality will be mercilessly punished by military force.<sup>53</sup>

Between May 1918 and February 1919, the All-Great Don Host would sentence almost 25,000 people to death, though many would be pardoned or amnestied.<sup>54</sup> Kornilov and other White generals told their men, “Take no prisoners! The more terrible the terror, the more victories.” The Bolsheviks launched terror campaigns against the SRs and other enemies.<sup>55</sup> These were the first steps towards the creation of new mobilizational systems, built almost, but not entirely, from scratch, in a world brutalized by three years of war.

In May 1918, the Bolsheviks suddenly found themselves facing a much more disciplined anti-Bolshevik army of 45,000 Czech and Slovak former prisoners of war. Formed in 1917, by the end of that year the so-called “Czech Legion” had 60,000 men and was probably the largest organized contingent of troops in the former Russian Empire with the exception of German units.<sup>56</sup> In March 1918, the Bolsheviks agreed to let the entire Czech army travel east along the Trans-Siberian railway so it could be transported across the Pacific and through the Panama Canal to fight on the western front. Dispatched eastwards on 70 trains threaded along vast stretches of the railway, the Czech forces turned on the Bolsheviks in May, when Czech troops in Chelyabinsk were ordered to disarm. Czech units promptly seized stations and towns along the Trans-Siberian railway, and the telegraph links between them. Using the armed trains they now controlled like mobile forts, they took over stations and settlements in much of Siberia. By June, with allied support, their role had



changed. Their aim now was to control Siberia and support allied intervention against the Bolsheviks.

The military threat from the Czech troops forced the Bolshevik government to take some critical military decisions. In the belief that a world revolution was imminent, and that their duty was to survive long enough to fuel the coming global conflagration, they decided to mobilize ruthlessly. By May 1918, Lenin and Trotsky had persuaded the Party to adopt more traditional forms of mobilization that depended less on revolutionary enthusiasm and more on good organization and strict discipline. The Party began to build a traditional army, with traditional military discipline and command, compulsory recruitment, and experienced officers. Trotsky was appointed Commissar for War on April 8, and presided over the military mobilization. The ruthlessness and determination of the Bolsheviks explains one military act of immense symbolic importance: the execution of the royal family. They were shot in Yekaterinburg in the Urals (Soviet Sverdlovsk), early in the morning of July 17, 1918, by the Cheka unit guarding them, as Czech units advanced on the town. The execution had been ordered by the Bolshevik government. Lenin argued it was vital “that we shouldn’t leave the Whites a live banner to rally around.”<sup>57</sup> All sides in the Civil War used terror against their enemies. On August 30, a Left SR, Dora Kaplan, shot at Lenin in Moscow. She failed to kill him but ensured his premature death, which may have allowed the eventual rise of Stalin. The Cheka executed Kaplan four days later, and then shot hundreds of SRs held in Bolshevik jails.

The first step in military mobilization was to recruit Tsarist officers, or “military specialists” as the Party called them. To reduce the likelihood of betrayal, the Party appointed Communist Commissars to supervise former Tsarist officers. Often, it kept their families as hostages. However, many former Tsarist officers were happy to serve the Bolsheviks if that meant defending Russia from foreign invasion. As in the “Time of Troubles,” it turned out that, even when unity and discipline had broken down at the top of the system, traditions of unity, cohesion, and discipline, often taking nationalist forms, survived among middle- and lower-level officials and officers. The Party also trained new cadres of working-class officers. By 1921, only a third of the officer corps consisted of “military specialists,” and 65,000 new officers had been trained, two thirds from the peasantry, a fifth from the intelligentsia, and just over a tenth from the industrial working class.<sup>58</sup> The Party promised special treatment to Red Army men and their families.<sup>59</sup>

A second decision tightened military discipline. Many in the Party agonized over whether a socialist army should use traditional forms of discipline, but Trotsky insisted on it. He personally ordered the shooting of deserters in one of the first encounters with the Czech Legion at Sviyazhsk, near Kazan’. His ruthlessness helped turn the tide, and in September 1918, the Red Army turned back Czech units. In July, the Party began drafting its own members into the army, which ensured a rapid militarization of the Party’s political culture.<sup>60</sup>

A third task was to recruit soldiers. By August 1918, the Red Army had 500,000 men. In 1919 alone, the army grew from 800,000 to almost 3 million men.<sup>61</sup> By the end of the Civil War, in January 1920, the Red Army had 5 million soldiers, and included almost 50,000 former Tsarist officers. No Civil War

armies found it easy to recruit, but Bolshevik ideology probably made their task easier than that of the Whites. Even peasants, if forced to decide between the Reds and the Whites, were likely to lean towards the Reds who had promised to abolish landlord property rights. White leaders, in contrast, insisted on defending traditional property rights in the land.<sup>62</sup>

A fourth task was to feed and equip the Red Army, in an economy broken by more than three years of war. Early measures taken by the Party laid the foundations for what would come to be known as “War Communism.” Trotsky wrote of the spring and summer of 1918: “There was no food. There was no army. The railways were completely disorganized. The machinery of state was just beginning to take shape. Conspiracies were being hatched everywhere.”<sup>63</sup> In December 1917, the new government created a “Supreme Council of the National Economy,” *Vesenkha*, to plan and coordinate the economy. At first its powers were limited, but it reflected the Bolshevik commitment to mobilizing whatever resources were available. In the middle of 1918 the government formally nationalized all the country’s factories, having already nationalized the railways and the fleet. This was “direct mobilization” in its simplest and crudest form. After an initial period of near anarchy in which the government supported the idea of workers’ councils, it also introduced military-style discipline in many factories. In the countryside, it used the direct methods of grain requisitioning introduced by the Provisional Government. Getting food to the towns and to army units was a task of great urgency, particularly after losing so much of the Ukrainian bread basket after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Detachments of armed workers and soldiers were sent into the countryside, formally to buy grain, but in practice to take what they needed, under a system known as *prodrazverstka* or “allocation of resources.” As Lenin admitted after the Civil War,

The essence of “War Communism” was that we actually took from the peasant all his surpluses and sometimes not only the surpluses but part of the grain the peasant needed for food. We took this in order to meet the requirements of the army and to sustain the workers.<sup>64</sup>

The task of mobilization was simplified to some extent by the archaic nature of the military conflict. Though fought with railways and artillery, the Russian Civil War was very different from World War I. It was fought largely on horseback, though trains played a crucial role in moving troops, and the Communists, with control of the center, also controlled most of the country’s rail network.

The Party was now fully committed to the direct mobilization of resources, so much so that towards the war’s end, at the ninth Party Congress in March and April 1920, Trotsky proposed to militarize the entire labor force. Instead of demobilizing soldiers, he suggested they be used as “labor armies,” in imitation of the Third Army which had helped repair the rail network in the Urals. As Trotsky explained (in Mark von Hagen’s summary):

The armies provisionally erased all status markers that distinguished workers from soldiers; furthermore, they applied military methods to traditionally

civilian economic tasks by stressing discipline and sacrifice at the expense of material incentives. Finally, Trotsky recommended the labor armies as vehicles to introduce socialist planning into the devastated economy. He ... defended the militarization of labor as the only means to build socialism in a backward country.<sup>65</sup>

Market forces played an ever-diminishing role. The Bolsheviks had come to power committed to planning production and distribution and they banned most forms of private trade. In any case, hyperinflation destroyed the monetary system as the Bolsheviks printed money even more enthusiastically than the Tsarist and Provisional governments. Between the October revolution and the middle of 1921 the amount of money in circulation rose from 20 billion to 2.5 trillion rubles and prices rose 8,000 times. Communist idealists approved, describing the printing press as “that machine gun which attacked the bourgeois regime in its rear, namely, through its monetary system.”<sup>66</sup> As confidence in the monetary system collapsed, the Party had little choice but to mobilize people and resources by allocation, and usually that meant by force.

Some Party members, including Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii, managed to persuade themselves that the methods of War Communism, far from being unpleasant compromises with a harsh reality, were actually the birth-pangs of a new, socialist world, in which the fundamental mobilizational decisions would be made not through the market but through rational planning, and in the interests not of a small minority but of the vast majority of society. They argued that the structures emerging during the Civil War were not temporary improvisations, but represented the very essence of communism. After all, many elements of a socialist society seemed to be emerging spontaneously: money was vanishing, trade was dwindling, a working-class government was in power, it was controlling resources directly, and local Soviets were playing an active role in government.

But the pressures under which the system operated were huge, and what held it together was elite discipline. The Bolshevik party had a long tradition of internal discipline. Lenin had always been keen to eliminate disruptive elements from the party, a strategy with striking parallels to the methods of other builders of disciplined elites, from Chinggis Khan and Timur to Peter the Great. Such methods began with Lenin’s centralist interpretation of the notion of “democratic centralism,” and the split from the Mensheviks during the second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party. They continued with the decisive turn away from the moderate socialist position in April 1917, then the removal of the Left SRs in mid-1918, and the tightening of party rules on discipline during the Civil War. In the early days of the Civil War, elections continued within the party. But soon they were replaced by appointments from above, often at the demand of lower party organs desperate for competent and effective officials and officers. The party itself was militarized as party members were attached to and fought in the Red armies and as soldiers and officers were recruited into the party. Militarization made military discipline seem normal within the party itself. These disciplinary principles were accepted formally by the eighth Party Congress in March 1919:

The Party finds itself in a situation in which the strictest centralism and most severe discipline are an absolute necessity. All decisions of a higher body are absolutely obligatory for lower ones. Every decree must first be implemented, and appeal to the corresponding party organ is admissible only after this has been done. In this sense outright military discipline is needed in the Party in the present epoch. All party enterprises which are suitable for centralization (publishing, propaganda, etc.), must be centralized for the good of the cause.<sup>67</sup>

Bolshevik party discipline held just long enough to defeat the White armies. With victory in sight, sharp divisions appeared over tactics and strategy. But despite some bruising arguments, the party remained united under its unquestioned leader, Lenin. It also showed a remarkable capacity to reunite after difficult internal arguments, as it had so many times before, over the October coup itself, over the Brest-Litovsk treaty, over the formation of a traditional army, and on several other critical issues.<sup>68</sup>

While the Reds were united, their opponents were divided. The Whites were divided, first, by ideology. Little united them apart from hostility to the Bolsheviks. Their ideologies ranged from right-wing monarchism to revolutionary socialism. Kornilov was a traditional military conservative; his aide, Savinkov, was a former Socialist Revolutionary terrorist. The dominance of military men favored right-wing ideologies and forms of Russian nationalism that alienated populations in the borderlands in which many White armies fought. Most Whites were committed to defending private property in the land, which alienated the peasantry from whom they were trying to recruit soldiers. The Whites were also divided geographically, being confined to the peripheries of the former empire in the south, the north, and Siberia. This made it difficult for them to coordinate their plans in the critical campaigns of 1919. Finally, the Whites accepted support from foreign powers, while the Reds attracted patriotic support because they seemed to be defending Russia's core territory from foreign invasion. Tsarist Russia's former allies in Europe were horrified at the Bolshevik takeover, particularly after the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany. They formally recognized the White armies as legitimate rulers of Russia. And Britain, France, the USA, Japan, and many other nations eventually intervened directly in the Civil War, by sending military advisers, supplies, and sometimes small contingents of troops to support the White armies. However, war weariness ensured that allied support would be half-hearted, and the presence of foreign contingents supporting the White armies alienated patriotic Russian officers. Many officers fought for the Bolsheviks purely out of patriotism.

The major military campaigns took place in 1919 and 1920. As we have seen, the first anti-Bolshevik army, the Volunteer Army, began to form on Don Cossack territory at the end of 1917. In June 1918, in Samara on the Volga, Victor Chernov formed a "Committee of the Constituent Assembly," or "Komuch," in support of the now-dispersed Constituent Assembly. Other anti-communist governments appeared in Omsk and in Archangel in the far north. In November 1918, Admiral Kolchak formed a right-wing government in western Siberia, and by early 1919 he was recognized as the leader of all White forces. In the spring of 1919, Kolchak advanced on the heartland from

the east, and an army under General Yudenich attacked Petrograd from Estonia in the west. Those attacks were blunted before General Denikin managed to launch an invasion from the south. The failure to coordinate this three-pronged attack on the Bolshevik heartland proved fatal. For a brief while, the Bolsheviks controlled little more territory than the principality of Muscovy in the mid-fifteenth century. Denikin's armies would reach Orel, just 400 kilometers south of Moscow. But by October they were in retreat, and by 1919 the main White armies had been defeated. In the campaigns of 1919 in particular, the Bolsheviks benefited from their control of the heartland and the hub of the Russian railway network, which made it easier to move troops from front to front. Most of eastern Ukraine was conquered by Red armies in November 1920, though anarchist armies under Nestor Makhno remained active until late in 1921.

In April 1920, Polish armies invaded Ukraine. Red armies counter-attacked and invaded Poland, hoping to trigger proletarian uprisings throughout eastern Europe. But the armies of newly independent Poland checked the Red Army's advance in a campaign described vividly in Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry*. The Bolshevik advance ground to a halt in a campaign marred by rivalries between different commanders, and particularly between Stalin and General Tukhachevskii, who had played a crucial role in the defeat of Kolchak. In October, Poland and the Bolsheviks signed an armistice. A formal treaty was signed in Riga in 1921. Stabilization of the western front allowed Red armies to defeat the last White army in the far south, now commanded by General Wrangel, in November 1920.

## THE PERIPHERIES: REBUILDING THE EMPIRE

Victory in the heartlands also allowed the Red Army to begin mopping up operations in other parts of the former Russian Empire, from Central Asia to the Far East. The Bolsheviks, for whom class seemed a more natural mobilizational category than ethnicity, were surprised by the mobilizational power of nationalist movements during the Civil War, and would make great efforts either to incorporate nationalist movements on their own terms or to crush them as anti-revolutionary.<sup>69</sup> What emerged, as Martin puts it, was "a strategy aimed at disarming nationalism by granting the forms of nationhood."<sup>70</sup>

In practice, the Bolsheviks supported national rights while the old system was breaking down, and supported centralism as they started gathering power in their own hands. As opponents of imperialism they were committed to national liberation from colonial rule. Yet their analysis of nationalism as a bourgeois phenomenon meant that they saw no contradiction in ignoring nationalist movements supported by their enemies. Such dialectical subtleties gave the Bolsheviks plenty of room for maneuver during the rapidly changing events of the Civil War.

The peripheries played a distinctive role in the Civil War precisely because the Bolsheviks occupied the old imperial heartland. Anti-Bolshevik armies formed on all sides of the heartland, in Archangel to the north, in the Baltic provinces, in Ukraine and Crimea, and in Siberia. So the geography of the

crucial year, 1919, is very much a story of White armies closing in on the Bolsheviks before being driven back, piecemeal, by Red armies that would eventually secure Bolshevik control over most of the former Tsarist empire. The history of the Civil War in regions away from the heartland will be discussed briefly in Chapter 15.

## *CONCLUSION: THE RETURN OF THE PAST*

After the reconquest of eastern Siberia in 1922, the Bolsheviks/Communists controlled most of the former Russian Empire. The major exceptions were the more industrialized western provinces, where independent states emerged in Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Under the treaty of Riga, the Soviet government also surrendered parts of western Ukraine and Belarus to Poland.

By 1921, the traditional Russian mobilizational order had vanished. An entire ruling elite had been removed by the death, expulsion, or exile of the royal family, the nobility, the former capitalist classes, and much of the intelligentsia. In their place, a new mobilizational order had appeared, whose leaders came mostly from the radical intelligentsia. In many ways, the new system was very different from the one it replaced. Its leaders insisted they were about to build a new order, not just in Russia and Inner Eurasia, but throughout the world. They claimed to represent not a mobilizational elite, but the vast, previously exploited majority of society, and they claimed to be mobilizing resources in the interests of the majority of the population. In principle, they were turning the mobilizational pyramids of the past upside down. They claimed to represent the mobilizees rather than the former mobilizers.

In practice, though, their methods of rule already looked eerily similar to those of the past, and so, too, did the new mobilizational pyramid they were building. During the Civil War, the Bolshevik leaders had often adopted the methods of the Tsarist mobilization machine. They could claim, with some plausibility, that they had little choice during the Civil War. Now, though, those enemies had been defeated, and they faced the challenge of implementing the more democratic and egalitarian policies they had promised as socialists. Could they build an entirely new kind of mobilizational system, one organized in the interests of the vast majority of the population? Or would the claim that dangerous enemies still existed beyond the borders of the Soviet Union justify a continuation of traditional methods of mobilization and rule? These questions would hang over the entire Soviet experiment.

At the beginning of his article, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,” Marx described how the past can cling, vampire-like to the most radical reform projects:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when

they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.<sup>71</sup>

Inner Eurasia's ancient mobilizational traditions clung with equal tenacity to the new mobilizational structures that had emerged during the Civil War.

## NOTES

- 1 The significance of the survival of many middle-level officials, along with their traditional attitudes and habits of rule, was stressed by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed*; a decade after Trotsky's work, Nicholas Timasheff developed a variation on this idea in *The Great Retreat*. Among modern historians, both Sheila Fitzpatrick and Moshe Lewin have developed parallel, though not identical, arguments. See Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," and Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, 286–314. And see the retrospective discussion of these ideas in Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 3–5.
- 2 Yergin, *The Prize*, 151.
- 3 For a good survey of the links between war and revolution, see Lohr, "War and Revolution," 655–669.
- 4 P. N. Durnovo, "Memorandum, February 1914," published in Golder, *Documents of Russian History*, 3–23, quote from 21–22.
- 5 Fuller, "The Imperial Army," 545.
- 6 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 38; Wildman, *End of the Russian Imperial Army*.
- 7 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 164.
- 8 The above from Fuller, "The Imperial Army," 546–548.
- 9 Fuller, "The Imperial Army," 551–552.
- 10 Lohr, "War and Revolution," 659.
- 11 Golder, *Documents of Russian History*, 192.
- 12 On the introduction of prohibition and its effects, see Christian, "Prohibition in Russia."
- 13 Christian, "Prohibition in Russia," 114.
- 14 M. T. Florinsky, *End of the Russian Empire*, 44.
- 15 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 166.
- 16 See Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*.
- 17 Lohr, "War and Revolution," 665.
- 18 The parable of the mad chauffeur cited from Katkov, *Russia 1917*, 249–251.
- 19 Cited from Golder, *Documents of Russian History*, 116.
- 20 Lohr, "War and Revolution," 658.
- 21 Gregory, *Before Command*, 36.
- 22 Lohr, "War and Revolution," 668–669.
- 23 Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 52, no source given.
- 24 Florinsky, *End of the Russian Empire*, 228–229.
- 25 Cited in Holquist, *Making War*, 49.
- 26 Holquist, *Making War*, 80; Ch. 2 of Holquist's book shows in great detail how this process worked in the Don Cossack territory.
- 27 Lih, *Lenin*.

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- 28 From McCauley, *Russian Revolution*, 67, from *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, May 18, 1917.
- 29 McCauley, *Russian Revolution*, 72.
- 30 Figes, *Peasant Russia*, 52–53. The quotation comes from a small landowner in Samara district.
- 31 Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 19.
- 32 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 229ff.
- 33 Lih, *Lenin*.
- 34 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 31.
- 35 These and the figures in the next sentence from Chang, *Economics*, 398; he uses World Bank and OECD publications; figures in Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 135, suggest similar trends but give slightly lower percentages.
- 36 Holquist, *Making War*, 107.
- 37 Holquist, *Making War*, 285.
- 38 Holquist, *Making War*, 293–294.
- 39 Holquist, *Making War*, 44.
- 40 Holquist, *Making War*, 40.
- 41 Holquist, *Making War*, 106; 96 onwards discuss the grain monopoly and the growing resort to force.
- 42 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 188.
- 43 Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, 50.
- 44 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 190.
- 45 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 2: 147.
- 46 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 51.
- 47 Daniels, *Red October*.
- 48 Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, 96.
- 49 Cited from Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 66.
- 50 Smith, “The Revolutions of 1917–1918,” 137.
- 51 Holquist, *Making War*, 118–119.
- 52 Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 100–101.
- 53 Holquist, *Making War*, 158.
- 54 Holquist, *Making War*, 164.
- 55 Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 83, for the quote from Kornilov.
- 56 Much of the following is based on the vivid account in Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, Ch. 39.
- 57 Cited from Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, 310.
- 58 Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 77.
- 59 Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 78.
- 60 These debates are discussed in detail in von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*.
- 61 Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 79.
- 62 Figes, *Peasant Russia*, 260.
- 63 Trotsky, *My Life*.
- 64 Cited from Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 9.
- 65 Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 117–118.
- 66 Gregory, *Before Command*, 85, citing Preobrazhenskii.
- 67 Matthews, *Soviet Government*, 134.
- 68 See the fine short analysis of the reasons for the Red victory, and particularly the political skills of the Bolsheviks, in von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 125–126.
- 69 Martin, “An Affirmative-Action Empire,” 98.
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70 Martin, “An Affirmative-Action Empire,” 98.

71 Cited from Tucker, *The Marx–Engels Reader*, 595.

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## [13] 1921–1930: *NEW PATHS TO MODERNITY*

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### *INTRODUCTION: THE SOVIET UNION IN THE 1920s: ALTERNATIVE FUTURES*

By 1921, a new mobilizational elite controlled most of the territory of the former Russian Empire. In the Far East, the borders of the new system would reach those of the Russian Empire in 1922, and Mongolia, and even Xinjiang, would start drifting into the Soviet orbit. The main losses were along the western borderlands, where Finland, the Baltic States, parts of White Russia, Poland, and large parts of Ukraine remained outside the Soviet Union.

Now the Communist Party had to start planning how to build from these vast and diverse territories a modern, socialist society. This chapter will consider the evolving plans and structures of that new elite, which prepared it for the rapid and violent modernization drive of the 1930s. But to understand the real context of Soviet-style modernization, and some of its violent, contradictory, and surrealistic outcomes, it is important to remember how archaic was the environment in which the Communist Party launched its plans for a brave new world.

In the 1920s, many parts of the Russian heartland seemed quite as archaic as the remotest regions of Siberia or Mongolia. In Russian villages, Soviet officials and journalists keen to build a modern socialist society sometimes felt as if they had been transported back through the centuries. Here is a random snapshot of the world they encountered, taken from a newspaper report on medical practices in Tver province in 1925. Anisia Ivanovna of Briuchevo village in Tver province was described by the local paper as a healer (*znakhar*), also skilled in witchcraft (*koldovstvo*) and exorcism (*izgnanie besov*).

If a husband quarrelled with his wife, if a cow failed to conceive, if a person or an animal fell ill, or if a young man broke up with his girlfriend, people would turn to “Mother Anisiushka” for help. Before they even entered her house, she would greet them with: “You are possessed of the devil! Quickly, say a prayer!”

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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She would raise her skirt over her head, climb up on the oven, or crawl under a table, emerging once the visitor had recited a litany of prayers. Only then did she inquire about the reason for the visit. She would make the visitor drink a cloudy brew that was supposed to exorcise the devil, or she would give him a potion to mix in his tea or feed to his infertile cow. The villagers persisted stubbornly in the belief that there was something “holy” about Anisia, and they would travel fifteen to twenty kilometres to seek out her assistance.<sup>1</sup>

Such practices and ways of thought were not necessarily typical of Russia’s villages by the 1920s. Village life had been touched by modernity in too many ways – by the arrival of Red army units during the Civil War, by primary schools and army recruitment, or by changes in the outlook of village members who worked for wages in nearby towns. But nor were such ways of thinking entirely *un*-typical, and they may have become more common as trade collapsed during the Civil War, and villages became more self-sufficient. For most peasants, the 1920s meant returning to a more traditional world, after a decade of chaos and war. Like all regions of Inner Eurasia, Russia in this period seemed awkwardly balanced between the Neolithic and modern worlds, between a world of organic energy and traditional religion, and the rapidly emerging world of fossil fuels and modern science.

The astonishing denouement of the late 1920s would end the temporary truce between the modernizing goals of the new Soviet elite and the traditional lifeways of those they ruled. The world of the reindeer herder and the peasant would be turned upside down in the 1930s by the tsunami of Stalinist modernization. But to trace the source of these turbulent changes we must focus on the heartland, and particularly on Moscow, from where the storm of Soviet industrialization would eventually be unleashed.

## *THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY*

With a new government, a new ruling elite, victory in a brutal civil war, and a widespread belief that the Soviet Union really was building a brave new world, the 1920s were a decade of heady experimentation in politics, in economics, in art, in theater, in sexual relations. Yet members of the Communist Party never lost the bracing sense of danger they had experienced during the Civil War, as internal and external threats gathered during the 1920s.

## INTRODUCING THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

In the spring of 1921 the Party faced a crisis as severe as any in the last four years. Victory created new challenges, because the Party could no longer demand sacrifices that had seemed justifiable during the Civil War.

Divisions suppressed during the Civil War broke out within and outside the Party. Revolts erupted in the cities, the countryside, and even in the army. Many Party members wanted to persist with War Communism at any cost. But, once again, Lenin was the realist. Instead of persisting with wartime policies

on planning and the market, or adopting Trotsky's plan for militarization of the economy, he forced through a radical shift in policy that conceded many of the demands of peasants, workers, soldiers, and nationalists. By doing so, he kept the Party in power.

These changes, in the spring of 1921, replaced War Communism with what is known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), a strange mix of direct and market-driven mobilizational strategies that would shape Soviet society until 1929. Their introduction initiated a decade-long standoff between the new ruling elite and a still traditional society. That standoff would eventually be resolved in favor of the new ruling elite, because by the late 1920s the Soviet ruling group was as united, as disciplined, as ruthless, and as skillfully led as any ruling elite in Inner Eurasia's past.

The building of a new and highly disciplined ruling elite had begun in the revolutionary underground before 1917, and continued during the Civil War. Leading Party members such as Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii saw the militaristic discipline of the Civil War years as part of the process of building socialism. The Party, they believed, was not just fighting a class war. It was simultaneously building a society that was free of the corrupting and divisive forces of capitalism and the market, and managed by a disciplined, powerful working-class elite that would directly mobilize society's resources. By the end of the war, market forces did indeed count for almost nothing. Inflation had destroyed the monetary system. Banks, factories, railways, and most large and middle-sized enterprises had been nationalized, and were run by government agencies, no longer to make private profits but to build a socialist society. The trade in grain, the single most important commodity in the country, was nationalized (at least in law) and the government tried to control the supply of food to the towns and the army. To many within the Party, it seemed that the Party's discipline and its clear sense of direction had built a rational system of planned resource mobilization and allocation that was replacing the irrationality of the market.

Less idealistic Party members understood that the extreme methods of the Civil War were unsustainable. As we have seen, the economic role of governments had increased in all combatant societies, not because of ideology, but in response to the extreme pressures of fighting the first major war of the fossil fuels era. That required total mobilization. With an end to the fighting, the costs, wastefulness, and inefficiencies of central planning became unsustainable. The revolutionary government had kept armies in the field, but it could no longer supply the cities, the factories, and the villages. By the end of 1920, agricultural production had fallen to 64 percent of the level in 1913, and in 1921 it would fall further, causing a country-wide famine. Industrial production had fallen to 20 percent of the 1913 level, and transportation to just 22 percent, while imports accounted for just 2 percent of the 1913 level and exports for 0.1 percent.<sup>2</sup> The economy was breaking down. Fuel shortages left houses unheated, while factories, railways, and farms stopped working, threatening food supplies to the cities. Food shortages drove townspeople back to the villages and the cities were emptied. Petrograd's population shrank from 2.5 million in 1917 to 600,000 in 1920, while the industrial proletariat,

the class on which the Communist Party hoped to found a new society, shrank by about a third. Those workers and soldiers who still had ties with their native villages headed back to the countryside, where at least they could grow some food. Between 1 and 2 million members of Russia's former upper classes had emigrated, taking their wealth, their know-how, their capital, and their connections with them, while 7–8 million people had died as a result of fighting, repression, and disease, and another 5 million would die from famine in 1921–1923.<sup>3</sup>

Black markets, and networks of kinship, connections, and patronage supplied what the government could not provide. That meant that, in order to maintain the structures of War Communism, the government had to put more and more effort into preventing illegal trading. It even tried to prevent the small-scale retail trade of “bagmen”: individuals, many of them desperately poor, who carried sacks of supplies into the towns for sale. By the end of the Civil War, “cordon detachments” of troops lurked outside the major towns and at railway stations, stopping and arresting any they suspected of being small traders, and confiscating the goods they carried, often for their own use.

That such coercive methods of rule could not last became clear as the government began to lose its grip on the countryside, the towns, and eventually the army itself. Despite ferocious punishments for desertion, about half of all draftees deserted between 1918 and 1920.<sup>4</sup> They did so because of appalling conditions at the front, and in order to get back to their villages and protect their families and their land. Early in 1921 peasant armies recruited from former soldiers controlled large parts of Tambov province, and there were peasant uprisings in Siberia and the lower Volga provinces. In February 1921, the Cheka claimed there were 118 separate peasant uprisings.<sup>5</sup> In the towns, which the Bolsheviks regarded as their natural constituency, strikes began in the winter of 1920–1921, protesting at harsh factory discipline and food shortages. Nominally, food prices had increased almost 8,000 times between 1917 and 1921.<sup>6</sup>

Then cracks appeared in the army itself. Most shocking was the Kronstadt mutiny in March 1921, because the sailors of Petrograd's Kronstadt naval base had been among the Party's earliest and most loyal supporters. The mutineers, mostly from rural backgrounds, demanded a return to the more democratic Soviet structures of late 1917, the legalization of other socialist parties including the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Anarchists (banned since mid-1918), and an end to restrictions on free trade between the towns and the countryside. Delegates to the tenth Party Congress, which was meeting in Moscow when the mutiny began, boarded trains to Petrograd and took part in crushing the Kronstadt revolt on March 17. This was a brutal but delicate maneuver because many of the soldiers who crushed the revolt supported its aims.

In the spring of 1921, Lenin persuaded the Party to make one more U-turn. The policies introduced at the tenth Party Congress had two main elements: the Party made concessions to society as a whole, but increased discipline at the top. The government gave up its attempt to manage the entire economy and allowed a partial return to market forces, but within the Party it tried to maintain the high levels of elite discipline characteristic of the Civil War years.

The New Economic Policy represented a partial demobilization below the level of the Party and government, but a tightening of discipline within the new ruling elite.

Lenin proposed to the tenth Party Congress that it should replace forced grain requisitions with a tax on grain production. That tax, he argued, should be set at a much lower level than the quotas of the Civil War era, and it should be levied progressively, its percentage rising in accordance with the size of peasant farms. These measures were introduced first in the central provinces, but by the end of 1921 they had been extended to the rich grain lands of the periphery, in Ukraine, the northern Caucasus, and Siberia.<sup>7</sup> In the 1920s as a whole, the average level of rural taxation was probably less than 10 percent of average peasant income, a relatively low level of fiscal mobilization from the countryside.<sup>8</sup> At first the new tax was levied in kind, but after the monetary system stabilized in 1924, it was collected in cash.

Such measures could not have worked without freeing up trade, so the cordon detachments were abolished, and peasants and townspeople were allowed to exchange goods at market prices. Capitalism made a modest return. Many small rural enterprises were leased back to private entrepreneurs, often their former owners, who were allowed to employ up to 20 workers and produce goods for profit. Peasants were also allowed to lease land and employ laborers, though under clear limitations. Though the former capitalist classes had been expelled, the market was back and a new class of peasants and petty entrepreneurs or “Nepmen” was invited to open for business.

Despite grumbling within the Party, the changes worked, politically and economically. Open opposition to Soviet rule evaporated within a year, and production revived quickly. By 1926, agricultural production had reached pre-war levels.<sup>9</sup> Recovery was particularly rapid in Siberia and Kazakhstan. Industry recovered less rapidly, but much faster than most Soviet experts expected. Even the Soviet Union’s small fossil fuels sector grew fast. The war had shown the importance of oil, and by 1928, Soviet oil production exceeded the output of 1913. But, with limited industry of its own, the Soviet government used oil mainly to earn foreign currency so it could buy foreign machinery. By the late 1920s, oil was the most important single earner of foreign currency, and because the Soviet government was less concerned than capitalist oil companies with short-term profits (the Hungarian economist János Kornai would have said its budgets were “soft”), its trading organizations could cut prices ruthlessly to sell Soviet oil.<sup>10</sup>

Recent calculations suggest that by 1928, Soviet national income stood at about 111 percent of the 1913 level (calculated using 1939 borders), while national income per capita was at about the same level as in 1913.<sup>11</sup> Foreign trade recovered more slowly; by 1928 it had approached just 50 percent of the 1913 level.<sup>12</sup> There is wide room for error in such calculations, but they justify the conclusion that recovery was largely complete by 1928.

The Party made parallel concessions to nationalism, and these would prove more permanent than its economic concessions, at least in law, if not always in practice. In December 1922, it reincorporated many of the territories of the former Russian Empire within a “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics”



(USSR). The federal structures of the USSR were designed to manage regional nationalisms within the new order. Unlike the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union gave formal recognition to many different national and ethnic groups at different levels, from that of a Union Republic, to many different types of “Autonomous Regions.” In its first incarnation, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consisted of four republics: Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, and the recently formed federation of Transcaucasia, which included the Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijan republics. In July 1923, a Soviet Constitution was adopted. Formally this gave all members the right to secede. A unified governmental structure was created, with two federal parliamentary bodies, a Soviet of the Union, elected by the Union-wide Congress of Soviets, and a Soviet of Nationalities, representing different republics and ethnic groups. The Soviets, in turn, established an Executive Committee, which created an all-Union Council of Ministers to rule the USSR, under the watchful eye of the Party. Each republic also had its own government, though the real powers of republican governments were limited.

The Soviet Constitution was formally adopted by the second All-Union Congress of Soviets in January 1924. Later that year, three new republics joined the Union: Moldavia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Below the level of the Union Republics many subordinate ethnic regions were created, with varying degrees of autonomy, such as the Autonomous Republic of Tajikistan, which was initially part of Uzbekistan, but became an independent republic in 1929. Within the Russian Republic, Autonomous Republics and Regions included the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Bashkir, Tatar, Komi, Yakut, Buriat, and Karelian Republics. The Kalmyk Autonomous Region was created in 1920, with lands on the western shores of the Volga between Astrakhan and Volgograd; in 1935 it became an Autonomous Republic.

Many in the Communist Party disliked these federal structures because they saw nationalism as a bourgeois phenomenon that had no place in a socialist republic. However, Lenin and Stalin (the Commissar for Nationalities) insisted during crucial debates in the early 1920s that nationalism was a reality that had to be managed.<sup>13</sup> Nationalism, they insisted, could be used to build socialism at the local level, and they were probably right. During the Civil War, Bolshevik sympathy for national movements had helped defuse anti-Bolshevik feeling among non-Russians, and gain support among many who would otherwise have had no sympathy for the Party. Lenin and Stalin also knew that, as long as the Communist Party retained its internal discipline and its monopoly on political power, the federal *forms* of the Union were unlikely to threaten its cohesion.

For the most part, as Lenin and Stalin had argued, the federal structures of the USSR did defuse nationalist sentiment, without posing a serious threat to the Union until the 1980s, when the unity and the power of the Communist Party itself was breaking down. Once that happened, the USSR’s federal structures began to channel resentment at a failing system into nationalist forms, exposing the dangers of the compromises with nationalism made in the 1920s. Soviet federalism had built the idea of nationality into the very foundations of the Soviet political system. Indeed, over time, the structures of

the Soviet Union and the policies of the center would create new “*etnoses*” or ethnic identities, and Soviet cultural and educational policies would provide them with new national languages and historical and cultural traditions.

[B]y the end of the 1920s people who had not really thought in national terms before the First World War found that they now had a national language, a national culture, national histories and national political structures – in short, they had become members of a nation.<sup>14</sup>

The second component of the NEP was increased elite unity and discipline. At the tenth Party Congress, Lenin insisted that, even as it relaxed its control over society, the Party should not relax its grip on itself, or on what he called, in a precise military metaphor, the “commanding heights” of society. In the expectation of new crises after a temporary lull in the international class war, he insisted that the Party must maintain its steel. When some Party members argued for more democratic procedures as the reward for victory, Lenin introduced a resolution on Party unity that banned all forms of factionalism under the threat of expulsion. Article 7 of the 1921 resolution “On Party Unity” stated that,

In order to ensure strict discipline within the Party and in all Soviet work and to secure the maximum unanimity in removing all factionalism, the Congress authorizes the Central Committee, in cases of breach of discipline or of a revival or toleration of factionalism, to apply all Party penalties, including expulsion.<sup>15</sup>

Many who voted for the new rules understood their dangers. Karl Radek wrote,

I feel that it can well be turned against us, and nevertheless I support it ... Let the Central Committee in a moment of danger take the severest measures against the best Party comrades if it finds this necessary ... Let the Central Committee even be mistaken! That is less dangerous than the wavering which is now observable!<sup>16</sup>

Radek himself would be expelled under the new law in 1927, purged in 1937, and executed in a labor camp in 1939.

The government also kept its hand on the key economic levers, the “commanding heights” of the economy: large industrial enterprises including fuel and metal production, foreign trade, banks, railways, and shipping. Together these sectors accounted for 75 percent of industrial output. And of course the government kept its grip on the army, the police, on educational institutions, and on culture. In 1922 it created *Glavlit*, the institution through which it would manage literature and the arts.

The decisions taken in the spring of 1921 created the world’s first modern mixed economy. Centralized state structures controlled the government itself, the army, banking, foreign trade, heavy industry, the railroads, and large-scale manufacturing, while small-scale industry and the country’s small-scale farms were mostly managed by peasants and petty entrepreneurs, whose products were traded on retail markets. The system’s future would turn largely on the emerging balance of power between the state and the private sectors, between

direct mobilization and market forces. Lenin and his colleagues hoped that this framework would allow the Party's two class allies, the proletariat and the peasantry, to trade with each other, creating a virtuous cycle that would generate rapid economic growth and drive the building of socialism. This was Lenin's version of the *smychka*, the yoking together of the peasantry and proletariat to build socialism. Lenin's *smychka* would be symbolized in the hammer and sickle of the Soviet flag. But building socialism would turn out to be much more complex and require a very different kind of *smychka*, one much closer to that of the Tsarist era.

## THE CHALLENGE OF BUILDING SOCIALISM

Introducing the New Economic Policy kept the Party in power and allowed an economic revival. But the Bolsheviks were not content just to retain power. Most Party members were activists. They wanted to build a new society. Many were deeply disillusioned by what they saw as a retreat to capitalism after the dangers and achievements of a civil war fought to build socialism. They hoped to revive the revolutionary élan of the Civil War era, roll back the temporary concessions to capitalism, and start building socialism. The challenge was particularly formidable because, after seven years of war and civil war, Soviet society was in many ways less modern than the society ruled by Nicholas II.

Backwardness was most apparent in the countryside. This was still a peasant society, more so than in 1913 because of the breakdown of markets and supplies, migration back to the villages, and the disappearance of large commercial and noble estates. In 1914, 4 percent of peasant households had more than 13 *dessiatins* of land and 13 percent were landless. By 1921 the peasantry was more homogeneous. No one controlled more than 13 *dessiatins* and only about 5 percent of the population was landless.<sup>17</sup> Twenty-five million small to middling peasant households now controlled most of the land. In fact, rural society was more archaic than these figures suggest because the revival of the rural commune meant that land redistributions were more frequent in the 1920s than in the late Tsarist period.

The NEP redistributive commune retained the worst features of the prerevolutionary commune. Periodic redistributions reduced incentives to improve land; there were endless disputes about land distributions; strip farming wasted labor time in moving among strips (sometimes more than one hour per day). Compared to these arrangements, prerevolutionary communal agriculture was much more flexible.<sup>18</sup>

There was little improvement in the technological level of farming. Though 90 percent of all farms now used metal plowshares and mechanical horse-drawn harvesters, and threshers were used on perhaps 50 percent of the land, still, as late as 1928, three quarters of the area under grain was sown by hand, and almost half was harvested with sickles and scythes.<sup>19</sup> In the 1920s, yields on peasant farms in the Soviet Union were barely higher than those of medieval England.<sup>20</sup>

Industrial growth in the 1920s depended mainly on the restoration of pre-war productive capacity, except in a few areas where entirely new technologies appeared, such as electrification and diesel engines. In 1927/8 human and animal energy still accounted for about 70 percent of all energy consumption, whereas the equivalent figures for Germany, the UK, and the USA at the same time were 14 percent, 5 percent, and 10 percent, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Soviet society remained largely within the organic energy regime.

What would it mean to build a socialist society in such an environment, and protect it from capitalist aggression? This question was debated in Party committees and meetings throughout the 1920s in what is known to western historians as the “Great Debate.”<sup>22</sup> The discussions within the Party are extraordinarily interesting even today because they were carried on with intelligence, intensity, and urgency, and explored some fundamental questions of what came to be known in the West as development economics.

At the risk of extreme over-simplification, this section will summarize those debates, using ideas developed in earlier chapters about mobilizational strategies and their implications. Though contemporaries would not have seen it like this, I will argue that behind these debates there lurked mobilizational alternatives we have seen many times before.

Under traditional strategies of direct mobilization, governments mobilized using political levers, with little concern for efficiency or costs, as long as enough was mobilized to do what had to be done. Mobilization meant exerting pressure, and efficiency was a secondary concern. Under commercial or market strategies of mobilization, governments mobilized indirectly. They created institutional and policy environments that encouraged entrepreneurs to innovate and generate growth, in the expectation that governments would eventually profit from productivity-raising innovations and the increasing wealth of a prosperous capitalist economy. Efficiency did matter in commercial environments, because making profits in competitive markets meant using resources more efficiently than one’s rivals. And competitive markets constantly tested efficiency by measuring the opportunity costs, or the costs foregone by making one choice rather than another. Markets were powerful mobilizers because, by encouraging efficient use of resources, they could make resources go further, and they encouraged innovation. The difficulty for governments was that these alternative strategies of mobilization often conflicted with each other. For example, markets could flourish only if governments let them, by surrendering more direct and coercive methods of control over the economy.

In the nineteenth century, a new driver of growth had emerged: the fossil fuels driver. This was the main source of the astonishing power and wealth of modern industrialized societies. Rephrased in the language of these arguments, the question facing the Soviet government in the 1920s was: which combination of drivers should it deploy to build socialism and defend itself against the hostile capitalist powers that surrounded it?

Russia’s long and relatively successful experience of direct mobilization helps explain why the Bolsheviks, who were in any case ill-disposed to markets and capitalism, appreciated the possibilities of more direct, state-led strategies of mobilization. As we have seen, the extreme pressures of wartime, in which

mobilization was generally more important than *efficient* mobilization, also encouraged direct mobilization of resources. Though conventional economic wisdom suggested that industrialization was unlikely without flourishing markets, in practice direct mobilization turned out to work surprisingly well with the fossil fuels driver. Once the technologies needed to exploit fossil fuels were available, it turned out that they could be mobilized and deployed effectively by either direct mobilization or through markets, particularly in countries like the Soviet Union, which had vast potential reserves of fossil fuels and other modern resources.

None of this was obvious in the 1920s. Instead, many Party members feared that technological backwardness would sabotage the socialist project. Marx had insisted that socialism could not be built without high levels of productivity. Yet the Bolsheviks had launched the October Revolution in peasant Russia, in the hope that Russia's backwardness would prove irrelevant after a worldwide revolution that would create new and highly industrialized socialist allies, perhaps in Germany or even in a socialist USA. The converse of this argument was that without an international revolution a socialist Russia was unlikely to survive. In the middle of the October uprising, Trotsky said to the second Congress of Soviets, "If the rising of the peoples of Europe does not crush imperialism, we will be crushed ... that is unquestionable."<sup>23</sup> After the failure of the German revolution in 1923, world revolution seemed to have been postponed indefinitely. The Soviet government would have to either abandon the socialist project or try to build socialism under conditions that Marx would surely have deemed impossible.

Every debate in the 1920s turned on this dilemma. Party members rejected the idea of abandoning socialism with little argument. The Civil War had toughened the Party, and its members were unwilling to surrender the fruits of a bitter victory. That left the question of what a socialist government should do while waiting for a world revolution that seemed further and further away.

In general terms, the answer was perfectly clear. If Russia lacked the economic and technological preconditions for building a viable socialism, its government would have to start creating them. The needs of defense pointed in the same direction. Both Marxism and common sense predicted that more powerful capitalist rivals would eventually pressure the new communist state to compromise with or surrender to the capitalist world system. To survive such pressures, the Soviet government would have to build up the heavy industrial base needed to support a modern defense establishment. Politics pointed the same way. To the extent that the Party's power depended on the proletariat, it made sense to undertake a program of industrialization that would increase the number of industrial workers. Somehow, the Soviet government would have to deploy modern fossil fuels-based technologies, and it would have to do so fast.

Above all, it was necessary to build a strong army. Mikhail Frunze, who replaced Trotsky as Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs in January 1925, argued aggressively for rearmament, and even for a remilitarization of society after the partial demobilization of the early 1920s. In "The Front and the Rear in a Future War," published in 1925, he argued that the task was

to strengthen general work on preparing the country for defense; to organize the country while still at peace to quickly, easily, and painlessly switch to military rails. The path to this goal lies in mastering in peacetime the difficult path to militarizing the work of the whole civil apparatus ... [a task he believed would be made easier by] the state character of the fundamental branches of our industry.<sup>24</sup>

Frunze died in October 1925, to be replaced by Stalin's close ally, Marshal Voroshilov. But most of the Soviet Union's military leaders shared Frunze's belief that military strength required rapid industrialization.

Soviet leaders understood as well as their Tsarist predecessors that, in a highly competitive world, survival meant industrialization. However, while the Tsarist government had cautiously explored a capitalist route to industrial development, the Soviet government ruled out such a path for ideological reasons. But what alternatives were there? Was there a strategy of rapid industrialization that was also compatible with socialism? Was there a strategy that could avoid the class exploitation that communists saw as capitalism's besetting sin?

Within the Party, two broad answers emerged during the Great Debate of the mid-1920s.<sup>25</sup> The succession struggle that followed Lenin's death in January 1924 polarized discussion and made the debates seem clearer and sharper than they were in reality. But for the historian, this polarization has the advantage of clarifying the main positions in this fundamental debate about the future of the Soviet Union.

The first position came to be associated, loosely, with the name of Bukharin. In retrospect, it would be described as the "right-wing" strategy. Its defenders argued that NEP itself offered a path to socialist industrialization. The rapid growth rates of the early 1920s lent plausibility to their argument. As long as a socialist government held the commanding heights of Soviet society (including the most important position of all, the government itself), it could exploit the dynamism of market forces, but turn them to the advantage of socialist rather than capitalist development. The government could encourage peasants and small entrepreneurs to produce surpluses and trade them with the industrial sectors controlled by the state, at prices controlled by and advantageous to the state. Peasants and petty entrepreneurs would use the money they earned to purchase consumer goods produced by the state. Using the many powerful economic levers available to it, the socialist state could ensure that the terms of trade favored the socialist sector, whose profits would then be plowed back not into the conspicuous consumption of capitalists, but into socialist investment for the benefit of society as a whole.

The NEP strategy had many attractions. It required no new upheavals. It was compatible with the Leninist *smychka*, as it depended on sustained exchanges between peasants and proletarians. And compromise with capitalism at home might allow a truce with foreign capitalism, during which the Soviet government could purchase much needed foreign technology and expertise.

But could the NEP strategy work? Opponents, such as the economist Preobrazhenskii, pointed to serious difficulties. First, this was a strategy for slow growth, because the pace of growth would be dictated by the most backward economic sector: peasant agriculture. The NEP strategy meant developing at

the leisurely pace of “the peasant’s nag,” as Bukharin once put it in a phrase that would haunt him later. Few Party members found this prospect attractive or inspiring. Second, the NEP strategy gave excessive power to the peasantry, the more backward class within the *smychka*. If they did not like the prices the government offered for peasant produce, they could surely refuse to market grain, as they had during World War I. In this way, a dissatisfied peasantry could starve the towns and slow economic growth. Third, the strategy threatened to hand the economic initiative to a new class of petty capitalists or rich peasants, the “*kulaks*” or “tight-fists.” Bukharin gave rhetorical ammunition to his opponents when he encouraged peasants to “get rich.” As petty capitalists flourished, would not foreign capitalists gain increasing influence, turning Russia once again into an economic colony of the capitalist world as it sought foreign loans and technologies? Didn’t this mean surrendering all that the Party had fought for during the Civil War? Finally, Bukharin’s strategy favored consumer goods over producer goods, so it offered little prospect of a rapid buildup of heavy industry and armaments production. It threatened to leave the Soviet Union militarily vulnerable for decades.

As Gregory argues, there is plenty of evidence that markets did indeed control the terms of trade during NEP, despite the government’s grip on the commanding heights. “The two main indicators of market-resource allocation were the absence of an organized system of planning and the setting of most prices by markets.”<sup>26</sup> The government encouraged the formation of large trusts, which allowed some degree of monopoly pricing for industrial goods. Yet during the so-called “scissors crisis” of 1923 (so-called because industrial prices rose while agrarian prices fell, creating a scissors-shaped graph), even the government had felt obliged to tweak prices in favor of the peasantry, to ensure that exchanges continued between city and countryside. Private markets determined most retail prices, limiting the government’s control of the economy in general and reducing its mobilizational power.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps most damaging of all was Preobrazhenskii’s argument that the rapid growth rates of the early 1920s could not continue. Recovery after the Civil War was cheap because it meant bringing back into production plant and farmland that already existed. But further growth would mean building new factories and modernizing farms. That would require much more investment than could be supplied from the profits generated through the slow growth of consumer industries. Where would those funds come from?

To many, these criticisms seemed fatal. Yet what alternative was there to the NEP strategy of industrialization?

Opponents of the NEP strategy were in a hurry. Industrial development had to be rapid for ideological as well as military reasons. As long as Soviet society hovered in the socioeconomic anteroom of NEP, the door to capitalism would remain ajar. The alternative, which came to be known as the “left-wing” strategy, was to push on more forcefully towards industrialization, particularly in heavy industry and armaments. As for funding, Preobrazhenskii admitted with disarming honesty that socialist industrialization, like capitalist industrialization, would be an exploitative process, requiring the exaction of “tributes.” Lacking colonies of its own (a claim that might not have impressed the citizens

of Central Asia or the Caucasus), Preobrazhenskii argued that Russia would have to find these tributes from its own, predominantly rural population. It would have to embark on what Preobrazhenskii called (in a deliberate echo of Marx's "Primitive Accumulation of Capital") "primitive socialist accumulation." Translated, that meant taxing the peasantry hard, a mobilizational strategy familiar to all Tsarist governments. In effect, it meant direct mobilization of labor and resources on a scale massive enough to pay for the technologies, the mines, the factories, the infrastructure, and the fossil fuels needed to build a modern fossil fuels-driven economy.

How could a socialist government exact resources from the peasantry? Within the structures of the NEP, the simplest way was to adjust the price differential between industrial and rural goods. That meant lowering the price that the government – already a monopoly purchaser of grain – paid for rural produce. But the strategy also implied a harsher attitude to richer peasants and entrepreneurs, and a systematic favoring of the socialist industrial sector. Preobrazhenskii argued that resources mobilized through such methods could pay for a rapid buildup of heavy industry and defense industries, and for the large amounts of equipment and technology that would have to be purchased from abroad. The rulers of Muscovy would have found much that was familiar in such arguments. But the left-wing strategy also had a distinctively ideological component, for it was argued that a powerful defense sector would enable the government to encourage and even support socialist revolution elsewhere, in order to break out of its international isolation.

In its own way, the anti-NEP strategy was as risky as the NEP strategy. Above all, it threatened to break the socialist *smychka* by antagonizing the 80 percent of Soviet citizens who were peasants. The peasant uprisings of 1921 had shown the risks all too vividly. Faced with lower prices for their produce, peasants might rebel, or just refuse to market their surpluses. That would threaten grain shortage in the towns and a breakdown of internal trade. Something like this had already happened during World War I, and again in the "scissors crisis" of 1923, when grain supplies to the towns fell short of requirements, and the government had to back down and pay more for peasant-produced grain and produce. To put it more generally, the left-wing strategy seemed to require more mobilizational pressure than the government had been willing or able to apply in the early 1920s. Could the government exert such pressure, even if it was willing to try? That was a political rather than an economic question.

At the beginning of NEP, the government's weakness in the countryside seemed self-evident. The decline had begun under the Tsarist government, whose abandonment of redemption payments demonstrated its declining fiscal power. In 1913, taxes and rents probably accounted for about 10 percent of peasant farm incomes, whereas in the early nineteenth century they may have accounted for nearly 50 percent. A decade later, under the new mobilizational regime of the NEP, there were no rents, and taxes accounted for only about 5 percent of peasant farm incomes. Another measure of Soviet fiscal weakness and peasant prosperity is that peasants were consuming more of their produce and marketing less. In the mid-1920s, peasants marketed only 16–17 percent of what they produced, in comparison with the 22–25 percent they had sent



to market before 1914.<sup>28</sup> From the government's point of view, falling grain procurements measured a decline in its mobilizational power over the most important resources of a largely agrarian economy: those produced in the villages. One consequence was that foreign trade, which had been dominated before the war by grain exports that generated much foreign revenue, did not recover to pre-war levels. In the 1920s grain exports were just 25 percent of the pre-war level.<sup>29</sup> The Soviet government had a weaker grip on the grain harvest than its Tsarist predecessor, while the re-ruralization that had taken place during seven years of war and civil war meant that rural resources now made up a larger proportion of economic output than before the war. It seemed that the Soviet government lacked the mobilizational power needed to carry through the left-wing strategy of industrialization.

## BREAKDOWN FROM 1927

In the late 1920s, a combination of economic changes, panics about foreign threats, and changes within the Party itself steered the Party towards a violent and coercive resolution of these complex challenges.

As long as growth rates seemed satisfactory, the Bukharinite strategy remained official government policy. But by 1926, as production approached pre-war levels, signs appeared of the slowdown in industrial growth that Preobrazhenskii had predicted. In 1926 and 1927 more and more Party members began to doubt whether the NEP strategy could fund rapid industrialization.

International events intensified the pressure. In May 1927, a diplomatic crisis with Britain showed how quickly the Soviet Union might find itself at war with its capitalist opponents. The government began planning more seriously for industrial growth. Gosplan, the state planning body created in 1921 to take over control of the economy from Vesenkha, had been tinkering with economic plans since the early 1920s. In 1927, the government committed to an ambitious five-year plan, to be launched in 1928. It also embarked on several large and expensive prestige projects including a massive hydroelectric scheme on the Dnieper river, and completion of the Turksib railway linking Siberia with Central Asia through Semirechie. These commitments were made before the government knew how to fund them.

As the government's ambitions soared, the problem of funding became more urgent. As a first step, the government reduced the prices it paid for grain procurements in 1927, and raised taxes on private trade and the activities of wealthier peasants, the *kulaks*. Bukharin opposed these changes, warning that peasants would stop marketing surplus produce as they had during World War I. Early figures on the marketing of the 1927 harvest seemed to prove him right. By January 1928, peasants had put only 300 million *poods* of grain on the market, in contrast to the 428 million *poods* marketed by January 1927.<sup>30</sup> Bukharin argued that the government would have to back down and raise the price it offered for grain to avoid starving the towns.

But Stalin, by now the most powerful figure in the Party, pushed back. He was convinced there was fat in the peasant economy, which could be squeezed

out with increased fiscal and even political pressure. And he was not entirely wrong. Siberian peasants in particular had prospered in the 1920s and a French visitor to the region reported being told by local peasants that, “in 1926, 1927 and 1928 we had so much grain, so much bread, that we did not know what to do with them.” So Stalin insisted on low government procurement prices. And, as Oleg Khlevniuk argues, he had learned from Lenin (whose death mask he kept in his office) the tactic of using extreme policies to weaken moderates.<sup>31</sup>

In January 1928, Stalin took the Trans-Siberian railway to Siberia and the Altai region, where harvests had been particularly good, and harried local officials into collecting the grain quotas despite resistance. Taxes on *kulaks* were raised sharply in April.<sup>32</sup> Party activists were ordered to use criminal sanctions against hoarders if necessary. In July 1928, Stalin even talked of exacting tribute, using the medieval term “*dan*’.” He added, with disarming frankness,

The matter of which I am speaking is an unpleasant one. But we would not be Bolsheviks if we glossed over this fact and closed our eyes to this, that without an additional tax on the peasantry, unfortunately, our industry and our country cannot make do in the meantime.<sup>33</sup>

In a private letter, Bukharin complained that Stalin was returning to the “military-feudal exploitation” of a Chinggis Khan.<sup>34</sup> This was more than an interesting analogy. Marx’s labor theory of value implied that in capitalist societies, profits do not arise from equal exchanges, as argued in conventional economics. Instead, they represent a sort of tribute, or *dan*’ in Stalin’s phrase. Capitalist profits represent the veiled form that tribute-taking assumes in capitalist societies.<sup>35</sup> As Preobrazhenskii had argued, socialist societies, too, would have to take resources through “primitive socialist accumulation.” The difference was that those resources would be used not to benefit the rich but for society as a whole. These arguments, traceable, ultimately, to Marx’s labor theory of value, would provide, for many, a theoretical justification for the harshness of Stalinist rule.

In mid-1928, Party officials, many of whom had taken part in the grain requisitioning campaigns of the Civil War, understood the signals, as did peasants: the forcible methods of War Communism were back in fashion. Not even Preobrazhenskii had envisaged such a decisive turn from market mobilization to direct mobilization. By mid-1928, there were reports of 150 peasant revolts, and many minor incidents.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the campaigns of early 1928 did the job. The government got the grain procurements it needed, and its increasingly ambitious plans for industrialization were protected, as it avoided spending precious hard currency on grain imports. These successes encouraged the government to press ahead with rapid industrialization, confident that it could squeeze the necessary grain from the peasantry with increased mobilizational pressure. If the government could keep its nerve. ...

The question now was one of group cohesion, and it was one that Chinggis Khan and Peter the Great would have understood perfectly: did the government and Party have sufficient unity, discipline, and nerve to maintain the

intense pressure needed to pump enough resources from the countryside to fund rapid industrialization?

By mid-1928 it was clear that the procurements crisis of the previous year would be repeated, perhaps on a larger scale. A drought in Ukraine and the North Caucasus reduced output just as the industrialization drive was gaining momentum. However, the harvest was good in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Volga region, so the government once again concentrated its efforts on these regions. By early 1929, local officials had found that their task was eased if they could involve local peasants in the campaign, so they began to use “social pressure.” This meant organizing commune meetings at which poorer peasants were encouraged to help collect punitive grain taxes from their richer neighbors. In March 1929, the government returned to the imposition of set requisitioning quotas in Siberia, as in the Civil War, by exerting intensified “social pressure.” In an allusion to his regional tour of the previous year, Stalin described this approach as the “Urals-Siberian method.”

These shifts were made possible by changes in the political balance of power and in the attitudes, methods, and ideology of many Party members. Stalin, who now dominated the Party, had found that however much the peasantry and some Party members complained, more direct forms of pressure could sweat cheap grain from the villages. By late in 1929, Stalin and his allies were ready to face the full consequences of a decisive turn away from the market towards direct mobilization. This decision laid the foundations for a new social order dominated by a highly centralized and well-disciplined elite group capable of exerting colossal mobilizational pressure. Before we examine the revolution from above launched in late 1929, we must describe the changing political configurations that made this revolution possible.

### *BUILDING A NEW MOBILIZATION MACHINE*

In 1921 the Party was far too weak to take on the peasantry. By 1928 its new leader, Stalin, was willing to gamble that the Party could win such a contest. What had changed in just seven years? The crucial changes were in the structures and culture of the new Soviet elite, which by 1929 had acquired the unity, the discipline, and the ruthlessness needed to take on the peasantry. The changes owed something to Bolshevik traditions of unity and discipline, which had been tempered during the Civil War; something to the political skills and ruthlessness of Stalin as he emerged as the Party’s new leader; and something to Russia’s ancient traditions of elite discipline and solidarity.

Almost a decade of stability meant that government institutions such as the police and army were better organized than in 1921 and had more permanent and experienced cadres. Most sectors of the economy had recovered to 1913 levels of production, and the government had established its legitimacy and capacity to rule. However, the most important changes took place within the new Communist ruling elite.

The unity and determination of the Bolshevik party owed much to the ideas, the prestige, and the political skills of its founder, Lenin. By the end of the Civil

War, the Party already had a distinctive tradition of militaristic Party discipline and strong central leadership. The Bolshevik understanding of democratic centralism was that once decisions had been taken collectively by the Party, they were to be treated like military orders. The militarization of the Party during the Civil War made such methods seem acceptable, necessary, and even normal to most Party members and officials. By 1921 they had become as habitual as the command structures of the Petrine army and bureaucracy.

Changes in Party composition also affected cohesion and discipline. By the tenth Party Congress in March 1921 the Party had almost 750,000 members, most recruited during the Civil War. That was more than enough to swamp the 25,000 pre-revolutionary members. Most new members, like fifteenth-century *pomeshchiki*, were less educated and more disciplined and militarized than the Party's leaders, the argumentative intellectuals who had dominated the pre-war Party. Now the Party had to keep track of its swelling numbers. Until his death in March 1919, Yakov Sverdlov handled organizational issues. After his death, the Party created new administrative structures including an Organization Bureau and a Secretariat attached to the Central Committee to keep track (like the Muscovite *pomestnyi prikaz*) of membership and appointments. At about the same time, the Politburo was created as the executive committee of the Central Committee, a Soviet equivalent of the Muscovite boyar Duma.

Lenin's prestige and political skills were sufficient to maintain a high level of unity while he was alive. But after his death, in January 1924, no one had the same stature, and internal Party structures acquired increasing importance in maintaining unity. For a time, the struggle to succeed Lenin threatened to split the Party. Conflicts began as early as May 1922 after Lenin's first stroke. Everyone understood that the next leader would probably come from the Politburo, each of whose members had their own "fiefdoms": followers and institutions and even policy areas in which they were particularly influential.

Trotsky was the most visible and charismatic member of the Politburo. But his visibility proved a liability, because it ensured that his main rivals would unite against him. So, too, did his neglect of the task of building intra-Party alliances, and the fact that he had joined the Bolshevik party late, in July 1917. Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev, all members of the Party since its foundation in 1903, formed a triumvirate that blocked Trotsky's ascension. With Lenin gone, votes in the key Party bodies, the Central Committee and the annual Party Congresses, decided all fundamental issues. Trotsky did not command enough votes, and was removed from the Commissariat of War in 1925. After that, there could be no return. He was exiled to Almaty in 1928, expelled to Turkey in 1929, and finally murdered by a Stalinist agent in Mexico in 1940.

With Trotsky gone, the struggle was now between rival clientele and patronage groups within the Party that fought for power as viciously as boyar families during the minority of Tsar Ivan IV. Here, Stalin had critical advantages that were not obvious to his rivals until it was too late. The first was that, unlike Trotsky, he did *not* appear the most obvious contender for the leadership, and made every effort to avoid provoking alliances against himself.

In the early 1920s he was conciliatory, unspectacular, reasonable, despite the reputation he had acquired during the Civil War as a tough and, if necessary, brutal can-do politician. Lying low was necessary in part because, as Lenin lay dying at the end of 1922, he demanded Stalin's removal. "Stalin," he wrote, "is too rude, and this shortcoming, though quite tolerable in our midst and in relations among us communists, becomes intolerable in the position of General Secretary." We cannot know whether the assessment was personal (Stalin had indeed been rude to Lenin's wife, Krupskaja), or reflected a more considered judgment on Stalin as a potential leader.

Stalin's second advantage was his control of the Party Secretariat, the Soviet equivalent of the Muscovite *pomestnyi prikaz*, an organization whose clerical functions hid its growing influence over Party members. Its powers of allocation and appointment gave it influence over professional Party workers at all levels. It acquired extensive patronage over the nationwide network of provincial Party secretaries, who, like Muscovite *voevodas* and Tsarist governors, were the backbone of regional political structures. Party secretaries in turn acquired immense power over rank-and-file members. Indeed, it is helpful to think of two distinct layers of government. The central government took general policy decisions. However, at the provincial level regional party secretaries were the real bosses, controlling and sometimes stifling the implementation of central government orders, often in close collaboration with local leaders of the secret police and heads of major enterprises, and government and economic departments.

In the early 1920s, in a peculiarly Soviet version of double-entry bookkeeping, Party officials at the center and in the provinces began drawing up lists of key positions in all areas of government, and parallel lists of officials suitable for appointment to these positions. These lists, the *nomenklatura*, would provide the best guide to the dominant figures in the Soviet ruling group throughout Soviet history. Like the Petrine Table of Ranks, they listed those positions and individuals that members of the ruling group regarded as important. These mechanisms gave the Secretariat and the professionals of the Party machine (the *apparat*) increasing control over appointments, whether in the Party, the ministries, the police, or in education and the arts, as Party members subject to the discipline of the *apparat* began to dominate influential positions throughout Soviet society. In this way, the Party *apparat*, with the Secretariat at its head, and regional Party secretaries as its links to the provinces, emerged as the hidden backbone of the Soviet political system.

These mechanisms gave the Secretariat great power over the rank and file of the Party. Trotsky, a strong supporter of Party unity and discipline during the Civil War, began to criticize these developments as early as October 1923, when he could already sense the ground shifting under his own feet.

Even during the harshest days of war communism, the *system of appointments within the party* was not practiced on one-tenth the scale it is now. The practice of appointing secretaries of province committees is now the rule. This creates for the secretaries a position that is essentially independent of the local organizations. In

the event that opposition, criticism, or protests occur, the secretary, with the help of the center, can simply have the opponent *transferred* ... Organized from the top down, the secretarial apparatus has, in an increasingly autonomous fashion, been gathering "all the strings into its own hands." ...

There has been created a very broad layer of party workers, belonging to the apparatus of the state or the party, who have totally renounced the idea of holding their own political opinions or at least of openly expressing such opinions, as if they believe that the secretarial hierarchy is the proper apparatus for forming party opinions and making party decisions. Beneath this layer that refrains from having its own opinions lies the broad layer of party masses before whom every decision stands in the form of a summons or command.<sup>37</sup>

The Secretariat gave Stalin forms of political leverage that even Lenin had not wielded, an instrument with which to control the careers of Party officials throughout the ruling elite. In fact, it gave him the sort of personal influence that Chinggis Khan had wielded over his *keshig* or Timur over his *uymaq*. If Kamenev could influence the career of officials in the Moscow Party apparatus, or Zinoviev that of officials in Petrograd, the city called Leningrad after Lenin's death, Stalin could influence the careers of a vast network of Party officials, whatever government agency they worked in and whatever personal fiefdoms they belonged to, whether they worked in the Party machine, the army, the police, regional or republican government, or the expanding apparatus of the various commissariats. By the late 1920s, anyone with ambition had to reckon with the Secretariat, which presided over and allocated positions within the *nomenklatura*. The Party Secretariat was rapidly becoming the most significant source of patronage in all areas of Soviet life.

As Trotsky noted, the mood and culture of the Party was also changing. By the 1920s, the Party already administered much of the wealth of the largest country in the world. Those who joined in the 1920s were no longer joining a tiny, embattled, and impoverished underground party. They were joining a vast political network that controlled a huge and powerful mobilizational machine. By 1930 the Party had almost 1.7 million members. Most were from the working classes, mainly from the proletariat, their average age was low, and so were their average educational qualifications. Such people, particularly those who had joined during the Civil War, expected to obey and to give orders, unlike the pre-revolutionary members who expected to debate and to argue. This changing balance within the Party would allow Stalin to use lesser Party officials against his rivals in the leadership as Ivan IV had used the *oprichniki* against rivals in the boyar elite.

Of course, the patronage power available to the Secretariat had to be wielded with subtlety, and Stalin proved extremely skillful at using the power at his disposal without overreaching. He was the quintessential numbers politician, very good at counting votes, with a long memory for favors, slights, and errors, very good at maneuvering so as to end up on the right side in most internal Party debates, and ruthless in exploiting Party room victories. He also had the patience for careful networking that more charismatic politicians such as Trotsky despised.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has identified another crucial aspect of Stalin's mobilizational strategies.<sup>38</sup> In the 1920s, as the Party recruited many former Tsarist officers into the army, and bourgeois economists and technicians into its ministries and enterprises, Stalin and others argued that it was dangerous to rely too much on non-Party experts from middle-class backgrounds, because they were unlikely to have genuine enthusiasm for the socialist project. The "Shakhty" affair of 1928 reflected these fears, which were widespread within the Party. It began with accusations of "wrecking" against Tsarist-era engineers and managers, and ended with the arrest and sometimes execution of thousands of the country's best managers and engineers for treachery or sabotage.<sup>39</sup>

Stalin argued that such dangers made it vital to train a new, working-class elite of "Red experts," people who would support the building of socialism because of their class background, but who could also bring valuable technological skills to the task. Between 1928 and 1932 the Party drafted more than 100,000 ambitious and talented young working-class Party loyalists into institutes and schools, to take crash courses in industrial and commercial skills. In the late 1930s, this generation, the so-called *vydvizhentsy* (those "brought forward") moved to positions at the very top of the system, replacing the many "bourgeois" experts or Lenin-era Party members killed or imprisoned during the Stalinist purges. They were so young that they would remain at the top for much of the rest of the Soviet Union's 70-year history. They were Stalin's equivalent of the talented outsiders that had formed the disciplined core of the political systems of Chinggis Khan, of Timur, of Ivan IV, and of Peter I.

Policy mattered too. After Lenin's death, Stalin effectively presented himself as the defender and heir of Lenin's legacy and a loyal follower of "Leninism," and he would present all his policy initiatives as fulfillments of Lenin's legacy. His lecture series, "Foundations of Leninism," given at Sverdlovsk University four months after Lenin's death, helped create the notion of Leninism as a distinct and coherent body of ideas, of which Stalin was the guardian.

Stalin also supported policies that had broad appeal within the Party. These began with his commitment to the idea of "Socialism in One Country," which revived the Utopian enthusiasm that the Party had generated during the Civil War for the project of building a new society. Despite the complex discussions about whether socialism could be built without a world revolution, to many Party members there was no alternative to building socialism even in an isolated Soviet Union. If the Party was not to stand still, and if it was to defend itself against hostile capitalist powers, it would have to industrialize rapidly, and for most Party members, industrialization meant building socialism.

By 1928, Stalin held most of the threads of a vast network of political influence within and beyond the Party. He was also identified with a forceful mobilizational strategy that appealed to most Party members and promised to fulfill the goals of what was now being called "Leninism." He offered a clear and inspiring way out of the dilemmas of the 1920s by insisting that Soviet Russia could build socialism on its own, without relying on market forces or waiting for an international revolution. It simply had to return to the forceful methods that had worked during the Civil War. This approach appealed particularly to *praktiki* within the Party, to those impatient with dialectical subtleties who

wanted to get on with the job. His resistance to demands for greater democracy within the Party earned him the support of provincial Party secretaries, for it shielded them from excessive scrutiny. His forceful approach to the peasantry increased the influence of the secret police and earned him support within the police apparatus. And he had largely succeeded in presenting himself as the representative of true Leninism. During the conflicts of the 1920s, these many forms of influence ensured that Stalin was almost always on the right side of crucial votes in the Party Congresses or Central Committee. By the late 1920s he wielded more power than any other Party leader.

By 1927 Stalin had the power and the following needed to insist on his own solutions to the procurements crisis, despite the objections of Bukharin, by now his only serious rival. By the end of 1928, Bukharin and the so-called “Rightists” had been defeated, along with the fiscal conservatism that they represented. Stalin began to look like the true heir to Lenin, and his plans for massive expenditure on industrial and military mobilization now counted as the Party’s “General Line.”

The lavish press coverage of Stalin’s 50th birthday, on December 21, 1929, was a foretaste of the future. But the turn to collectivization and rapid industrialization that Stalin launched at the end of 1929 was also a way of mobilizing enthusiasm from below for a project that was dangerous and full of difficulties and challenges, though heroic in its scale and capable of generating new forms of patriotic pride. In November 1929, Stalin wrote in the Party newspaper, *Pravda* (“The Truth”),

We are advancing full steam ahead along the path of industrialization – to socialism, leaving behind the age-old “Russian” backwardness. We are becoming a country of metal, an automobilized country, a tractorized country. And when we have put the USSR on an automobile, and the *muzhik* on a tractor, let the esteemed capitalists, who boast of their “civilization,” try to overtake us. We shall see which countries may then be “classified” as backward and which as advanced.<sup>40</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Altrichter, “Insoluble Conflicts,” 206ff.
- 2 Gregory, *Before Command*, 91.
- 3 Raleigh, “Russian Civil War,” 166.
- 4 Raleigh, “Russian Civil War,” 160.
- 5 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 14.
- 6 Gregory, *Before Command*, 85.
- 7 Holquist, *Making War*, 264; after the introduction of NEP, forcible requisitioning continued in “the grain-rich peripheries: the Don, the Northern Caucasus, Ukraina, and Siberia.” Furthermore, “Because of the way NEP was introduced in the Soviet Republic’s grain-rich regions, it led to an increase, rather than a decline, in popular unrest” (208).
- 8 Gregory, *Before Command*, 87.
- 9 Wheatcroft and Davies, “Agriculture,” 111.



- 10 Yergin, *The Prize*, 248–249.
- 11 Harrison, “National Income,” 42.
- 12 Figures from Gregory, *Before Command*, 91.
- 13 Smith, *Red Nations*, Ch. 3.
- 14 Smith, *Red Nations*, 73–74.
- 15 Cited from Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 119.
- 16 Cited in Schapiro, *Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 215–216.
- 17 Figures from Gregory, *Before Command*, 84.
- 18 From Gregory, *Before Command*, 104.
- 19 Wheatcroft and Davies, “Agriculture,” 112, for the information in this paragraph.
- 20 Lewis, “Technology,” 184.
- 21 Lewis, “Technology,” 184.
- 22 The most accessible discussion of the “Great Debate” can still be found in Nove, *Economic History*; there is a fuller account in Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate*.
- 23 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 210.
- 24 Cited from Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 16.
- 25 They are discussed with great clarity in Nove, *Economic History* and “Was Stalin Really Necessary?”
- 26 Gregory, *Before Command*, 94.
- 27 Gregory, *Before Command*, 96.
- 28 Davies, “Changing Economic Systems,” 10.
- 29 Wheatcroft and Davies, “Agriculture,” 111.
- 30 Nove, *Economic History*, 149.
- 31 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 3.
- 32 Hughes, “Capturing the Russian Peasantry.”
- 33 Hughes, “Capturing the Russian Peasantry,” 94.
- 34 Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 306–307; Hughes, “Capturing the Russian Peasantry,” 94; in July 1928 Stalin talked of exacting “a kind of *dan*?”
- 35 See Cohen, “More on Exploitation,” for a critique of the Marxist labor theory of value that nevertheless accepts that gradients of power and wealth justify the claim that capitalist profits represent a form of exploitation.
- 36 Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 53.
- 37 Trotsky, *Challenge of the Left Opposition*, 55–56, from Trotsky’s letter to the Central Committee of October 8, 1923.
- 38 Fitzpatrick, “Stalin”; and see Lewin, “Society, State and Ideology.”
- 39 The campaign also did serious damage to the military; Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 65–70.
- 40 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 29, citing “The year of the Great Turn,” *Pravda*, November 7, 1929.

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# [14] 1930–1950: *THE STALINIST INDUSTRIALIZATION DRIVE AND THE TEST OF WAR*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

After 1929, the Stalinist mobilizational drive swept like a hurricane through Inner Eurasia, transforming institutions, people, ideas, lifeways, and landscapes. After 1941, the Stalinist hurricane merged with the even larger storm of World War II. The twin storms of industrialization and war left behind vast amounts of human and material debris, but they also dragged the Soviet Union into the era of fossil fuels. In its dependence on mobilizational pressure and on foreign technologies, the Stalinist industrialization drive was similar to the mobilizational drives of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Muscovy. But the impact of Stalinist industrialization was magnified many times over by the power of industrial technologies, by the vast energies released by fossil fuels, and by the compression of colossal changes into just two decades.

This chapter continues the story of the previous two chapters, and maintains the focus on the heartlands of Inner Eurasia, which drove most major changes in most of Inner Eurasia for most of the twentieth century.

## *THE LEFT TURN AND COLLECTIVIZATION: 1929–*

Despite simmering internal conflicts, by 1929 the Communist Party was united behind a strong new leader, Stalin, who would show himself to be as able, decisive, and brutal as Peter the Great. Ruling-class unity rested not just on shared goals, but also on political networks held together by ties of patronage, Party discipline, and hopes for a better future, managed by the Secretariat, and institutionalized within a *nomenklatura* structure similar to Peter's Table of Ranks. The unity and discipline of this elite allowed the government to build

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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the world's first modern "command economy," that is to say, a modern industrial economy,

in which the coordination of economic activity, essential to the viability and functioning of a complex social economy, is undertaken through administrative means – commands, directives, targets and regulations – rather than by a market mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

This was never really a "planned economy," except in the rough sense that the government set goals and exerted pressure. The government simply did not have enough power or information to plan an entire economy. But it *could* exert pressure, and on a colossal scale. What drove the system was a combination of direct mobilization and modern technologies.

By 1928, Stalin and many others within the Party were both convinced by, and temperamentally inclined towards, the idea of industrializing through a vast and, if necessary, coercive mobilizational drive. The resources were there. They just had to be rounded up. In 1928, Stalin told local officials in Siberia:

Take a look at the *kulak* farms, you'll see their granaries and barns are full of grain; they have to cover the grain with awnings because there's no more room for it inside. ... I propose that:

- a) you demand that the *kulaks* hand over their surpluses at once at state prices;
- b) if they refuse to submit to the law, you should charge them under Article 107 of the RSFSR Criminal Code and confiscate their grain for the state, 25 per cent of it to be redistributed among the poor and less well-off middle peasants.<sup>2</sup>

On November 7, 1929, after the harvest was in, Stalin published an article called "The Great Turn." It announced an all-out drive to eliminate the private sector in the countryside by combining peasant farms into large collective farms or *kolkhozy*, and expropriating the richer peasants, the *kulaks*. All this was to be done in just a few months.

Party officials who had visited the villages two years in a row to squeeze out grain at rock bottom prices now returned once more. This time, their task was to collectivize all farms before the spring sowing. They organized village meetings at which they tried to encourage the heads of poorer households to pool their resources in collective farms, which would be supplied with buildings, land, and livestock expropriated from the richer farmers, the *kulaks*. Altogether, about a million *kulak* households, or 5–6 million individuals, were driven out of their villages, often into labor camps, sometimes in the middle of winter. Within two years several hundred thousand had died.<sup>3</sup> John Scott, an American welder who worked in Magnitogorsk in this period, met a former *kulak* who explained the chaotic and violent processes by which peasants could be classified as *kulaks*:

the poor peasants of the village get together in a meeting and decide: "So-and-so has six horses; we couldn't very well get along without those in the collective farm; besides he hired as many last year to help on the harvest." They notify the GPU [secret police], and there you are. So-and-so gets five years. They confiscate his

property and give it to the new collective farm. Sometimes they ship the whole family out. When they came to ship us out, my brother got a rifle and fired several shots at the GPU officers. They fired back. My brother was killed.<sup>4</sup>

The assault of 1.5 million Party members and officials on 124 million peasants succeeded because of the strategic weaknesses of all peasantries – their illiteracy, their geographical dispersion, and the lack of organizational and informational networks to coordinate resistance. They lacked the unity, the discipline, and the organizational ties that bound the Party together, and this allowed the Party to deal with the peasantry not as a class, but village by village. In the 1920s, Russia's peasants lived in 614,000 rural settlements, whose average size was just 200 people, or 30–40 households.<sup>5</sup> Expropriation of the *kulaks*, or “sub-*kulaks*” (*kulak* sympathizers) split the villages and deprived them of natural leaders. But the villages did not split as easily as Party members had hoped, partly because the wealthier peasants, like Mongolian lamaserics, provided employment, patronage, protection, and loans to poorer peasants. Entire villages often opposed dekulakization, and army or police units had to be brought in to enforce collectivization. In despair and uncertainty, or just because they could no longer cope, peasants slaughtered half the livestock in the Soviet Union, wiping out about a quarter of the value of the country's agricultural stock.

Collectivization was chaotic partly because officials and police were as confused as the peasants. They had to act fast, under huge pressure, and on poorly thought-through and contradictory orders that they often did not understand. Despite the chaos, by February 1930 the government claimed that half of all peasants had joined collective farms, though most *kolkhozy* existed only in the paperwork of local officials. Meanwhile the chaos threatened the spring sowing. In January and February of 1930 there were 1,500 anti-government protests or incidents in rural areas, involving a quarter of a million individuals. Protests peaked in March, when there were 6,500 incidents involving perhaps 2 million individuals.<sup>6</sup> The sharp increase in protests was prompted partly by an article published by Stalin on March 2, in which he denounced the excesses of local officials. They had become “dizzy with success,” he warned, and some had relied incorrectly on coercive methods. Instead, he insisted, collectivization had to be carried out with the support of the peasantry. Party officials backed off, and many villagers left the recently established collective farms. By July even government statistics suggested that only a quarter of the peasantry and a third of the sown area belonged to collective farms.

But the advance was soon renewed, and a combination of government concessions (contained in a new “Collective Farm Charter”), the removal of potential leaders through dekulakization, and sheer exhaustion, persuaded many peasants to accept collectivization. Yet the worst was still to come. In 1932 and 1933, excessive demands for procurements, the disruption of collectivization, inefficient management, and poor weather combined to create one of the greatest of modern famines. The famine was concentrated in Ukraine, the Volga region, the North Caucasus, and Kazakhstan. Between 4 and 6 million may have died, though some estimates put the casualties higher.<sup>7</sup>

The writer Mikhail Sholokhov (1905–1984), who had fought in the Civil War and would become a member of the Party in 1932, wrote to Stalin about the worsening situation in his home region of Veshenskaia on the Don. In January 1931, he wrote,

In most kolkhozes cattle are dying on a massive scale ... In the Veshenskaya *raion*, ... if things stay the same, if kolkhozes are not provided immediately with fodder, only 20–30% of cattle will remain, and even those will not be capable of work, directly threatening the spring sowing campaign. ... Comrade Stalin! The situation in the *raions* of the former Donetsk district is, with no exaggeration, catastrophic. ... But the local press is silent, party organizations are doing nothing to improve the situation by feeding the animals that are still alive.<sup>8</sup>

A year later, in April 1932, he described the emerging “war” in the villages.

On the farms a real [*formennyi*] war is being waged by agricultural officials arriving to take cows; they beat whoever gets in their way, mainly women and children; the collective farmers themselves rarely get involved but when they do it can end in murder.<sup>9</sup>

Next year, in April 1933, he was describing the famine.

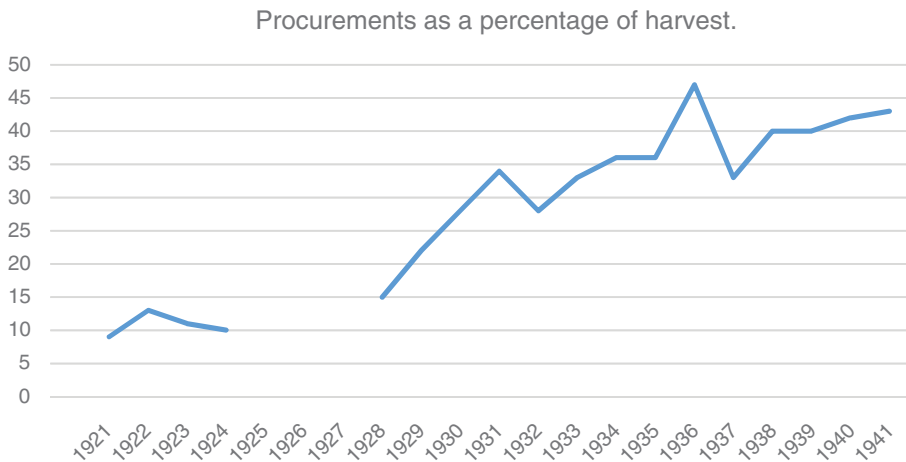
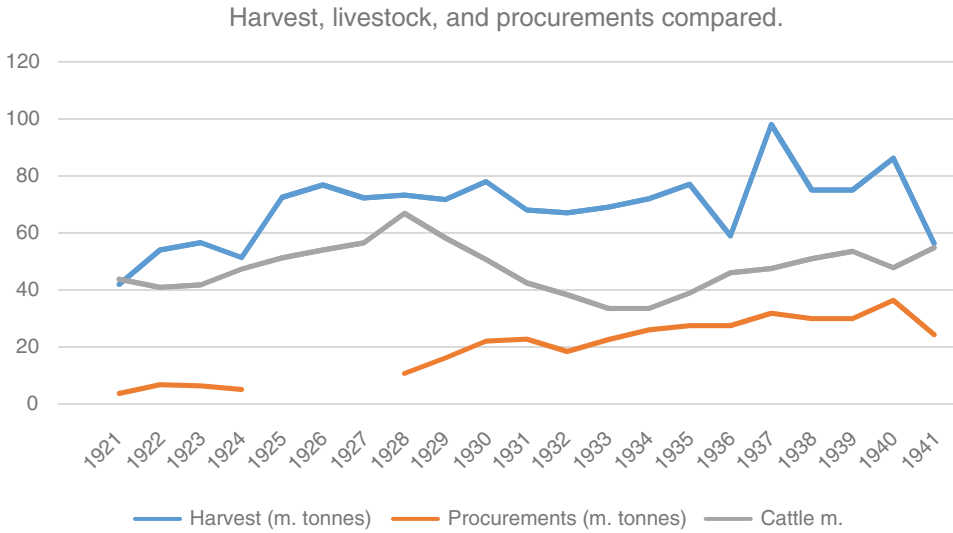
In this *raion* [Veshenskaia], as in other *raions*, collective farmers and individual farmers are dying from hunger; adults and children have swollen bellies and are eating things no human should eat, beginning with the corpses of animals that have died, and ending with oak bark and the roots of swamp plants. In short, our *raion* is no different from other parts of our region.<sup>10</sup>

In the mid-1930s, the government made some modest concessions to the rural population. The 1935 Model Collective Farm Code allowed collective farmers to keep a small plot of land for their private use and to sell what they produced on private plots at free market prices. In effect, these provisions recreated the private gardens of the nineteenth-century peasant *usad'ba*. Access to a private plot made up for the fact that labor on the *kolkhozy* generated hardly any income because the government paid so little for the produce of collective farms. As most collective farms coincided with pre-revolutionary communes, the parallels with serfdom were obvious to everyone, particularly once collective farmers were denied the right to travel without the permission of the collective farm director or the local Soviet.<sup>11</sup> Some joked bitterly that the initials of the All-Union Communist Party (VKP in Russian) meant “second serfdom” (*Vtoroe Krepostnoe Pravo*).

By 1936, the government had more or less killed off capitalism in the countryside. Despite the chaos and destruction, collectivization extended the mobilizational reach of the government because officials now dealt with a quarter of a million collective farms or *kolkhozy*, and smaller numbers of state farms or *sovkhozy*, each with a government-appointed director, instead of the 25 million individual households of the 1920s. Lazar Kaganovich (1893–1991) bragged that increasing government procurements showed the increasing power of the government over the peasantry (or “the enemy” as he called them).<sup>12</sup>

But while the government increased its grip on rural produce, the amounts produced on Soviet farms fell. Not until the mid-1950s would harvests regularly exceed those of the late 1920s. So, merely to maintain existing levels of production, the government had to pump resources back into the villages. Tractors were introduced by establishing “Machine Tractor Stations” (MTS), which owned and serviced farm machinery and rented it to collective farms. Though tractors looked like fossil fuels machines, for a time all they did was replace the draught power of horses slaughtered during collectivization.

The charts in Figure 14.1 illustrate the difference between growth and mobilization, between stagnating agricultural output and increasing mobilizational



**Figure 14.1** Two charts showing the meaning of collectivization. Data from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 273. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.



power. They suggest that, as a way of increasing output, collectivization was a spectacular failure. Total agricultural output did not increase between 1928 and 1940, while the number of cattle fell. But collectivization succeeded as a strategy of mobilization. In just 10 years, procurements, the share of agricultural produce mobilized by the government, increased from 15 percent to over 40 percent. The Soviet government was now exerting the sort of mobilizational pressure that Muscovite and Tsarist governments had exerted at their height.

## *INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE BUILDING OF A NEW MILITARY APPARATUS*

The government used its increasing mobilizational power to squeeze out the labor, food, and cash needed to industrialize and rearm Soviet society.

The first industrialization plans were produced in the 1920s before the government knew how it would pay for them. In 1928, Gosplan published an ambitious plan for industrial growth, only to have its targets raised and the time for completion shortened by a year. Between 1928 and 1932 total investment doubled, and by 1936 investment was four times the 1928 level.<sup>13</sup>

How did the government find the labor, cash, resources, and energy it invested in the industrialization drive? Though collectivization reduced agricultural production, it made a vital contribution to the industrialization drive. In 1935, one third of government revenues came from the “turnover tax,” the difference between the low prices the government paid for agricultural procurements and the high prices it charged for agricultural produce in the towns.<sup>14</sup> Grain exports, which earned much of the foreign currency needed to pay for foreign technology, increased even during the famines of 1932/3.<sup>15</sup> (In Magnitogorsk, early in 1933, John Scott heard complaints about the lack of sugar, to which one worker replied, “We still have to export a lot to get the money to buy rolling mills and other such things that we can’t make ourselves yet.”)<sup>16</sup>

Collectivization also gave the government more control over rural labor. Between 1928 and 1932, dekulakization and voluntary migration from collectivized villages provided 8.5 million of the 11 million new recruits to the urban labor force.<sup>17</sup> Recruiters were sent to the villages to lure workers with promises of a glittering life in the city, heroic challenges, and large bonuses. Newspaper campaigns talked up the opportunities and excitement of building socialism. Many peasants, disillusioned with life on collective farms, accepted the challenge. Meanwhile, the productivity of agricultural labor increased even as production stagnated. Per capita output on the farms rose by almost 30 percent between 1928 and 1937, because the agricultural labor force was smaller than in 1928, worked harder, and used more machinery.<sup>18</sup>

The government did not just mobilize peasant labor. Engineers or recent graduates or people with special skills were moved by government order to huge construction projects. In 1930, the entire staff of Magnitostroi trust, based in Sverdlovsk (former Yekaterinburg), was sent to Magnitogorsk, which was still little more than a huge construction site in the steppes. They were not pleased.

[M]any greeted the [relocation] notice as a personal tragedy. It was very difficult, even pitiful, to forsake the comfort of one's own apartment in the busy and well-known city. And for what? To settle God knows where, in the middle of some deserted mountain of the steppe.<sup>19</sup>

Many, including kulaks, were mobilized much more brutally. In Magnitogorsk in the early 1930s, 40,000 kulaks lived in a "Special Labor Settlement" surrounded by barbed wire, while criminals lived in a special "Corrective Labor Colony."<sup>20</sup> By the mid-1930s, John Scott reported:

Some fifty thousand Magnitogorsk workers were directly under GPU [secret police] supervision. About eighteen thousand de-kulakized, well-to-do farmers ... and from twenty thousand to thirty-five thousand criminals – thieves, prostitutes, embezzlers, who performed unskilled labor usually under guard – these formed the reservoir of labor power needed to dig foundations, wheel concrete, shovel slag, and do other heavy work. The criminals ... were usually isolated from the rest of the city. They went to work under armed guard, ate in special dining-rooms, and received almost no pay.<sup>21</sup>

Slave labor played a significant role in Soviet industrialization, as it had in the Mongol mobilizational system. It was particularly important in large prestige projects such as the building of the White Sea canal between Leningrad and the Arctic, and in remote regions such as northeastern Siberia, where it was hard to attract free labor. By 1929, Soviet planners realized that those in labor camps could "come to the assistance of those economic enterprises which experience an [unskilled] labor shortage," and they began to incorporate "the work performed by those deprived of liberty" into their production plans.<sup>22</sup>

Forced labor was not cheap, because it required a vast apparatus of camps, guards, administrators, railways, lorries, and suppliers to move and manage workers who were hostile, unskilled, poorly fed, and of low productivity. But forced labor made brutal mobilizational sense, particularly in the north, where the work was harshest. It helped build the White Sea canal, new sections of the Trans-Siberian railroad known as the *Baikal-Amur Magistral* (BAM), and it was used to mine gold, silver, and industrial metals along the Kolyma river, or to log timber that could pay for foreign machinery, or to build new industrial cities such as Magnitogorsk in the Urals or Magadan in the far east or Norilsk in the far north. In Stalin's final years, the camps accounted for one third of Soviet gold production, a large share of coal production, and significant amounts of other products such as timber.

But even Soviet leaders wondered at times if free labor might prove more productive and cheaper.<sup>23</sup> A former inmate of the camps who tried to calculate the cost of forced labor in food, clothing, accommodation, and the costs of maintaining the guards and camps concluded that

those savings which were actually produced through the forced-labour system were likely to be swallowed up by the very high cost of maintaining the machinery of coercion, which expanded simultaneously with the expansion of forced labour.<sup>24</sup>

As we have seen repeatedly, such wastage is to be expected from a system dependent primarily on direct mobilization, and more concerned to achieve set goals than to achieve them efficiently.

One measure of the mobilization of human labor for industrialization is the “participation rate,” or the proportion of the working-age population (aged from 15 to 64) working for wages. Between 1928 and 1937, this rose from 57 to 70 percent, which may be faster than in any other rapidly industrializing country.<sup>25</sup> Between 1926 and 1939 the urban population rose from 26 to 56 million, and the numbers employed in industry, building, and transportation increased from 6.3 to 23.6 million.<sup>26</sup> Those mobilized also worked harder than before. Peasants who migrated to the towns had to learn to work hard all year round, and at the more regular rhythms of industrial production.

Women worked a lot harder. Declining wages forced more women into the industrial labor force, while official feminist propaganda also encouraged women to enter the paid workforce. The percentage of women in wage-earning employment rose from 27 percent in 1932, to 35 percent in 1937, to 53 percent during the war.<sup>27</sup> Yet little was done to reduce the domestic burden of women or to encourage men to share in domestic work, and scarcity and queuing increased the time spent on tasks like shopping and laundering. The number of public cafeterias, laundries, and childcare facilities increased, but not fast enough to compensate for the burden of domestic labor. Indeed, such services can be seen as part of the government’s mobilization strategy, as they made it just possible for more women to take up the double burden of domestic labor and wage labor.

Paradoxically, the combination of a double or triple burden for Soviet women and significant social services lowered birth rates, which prevented a population explosion and allowed an eventual raising of per capita incomes. It also ensured that grandmothers played a disproportionate role in childrearing, education, and managing households, ensuring the preservation of traditional attitudes, religious habits, and songs and stories.

As our mothers spent their time at the universities and Komsomol meetings, the grandmothers gently rocked our cradles, singing the songs they had heard from their mothers back in the days when the bolsheviks were just being born. Whether Comrade Stalin liked it or not, traditional values were being instilled alongside the icons of the new era.<sup>28</sup>

Inside Soviet enterprises and factories, workers faced harsh industrial discipline. The government built up the authority and power of managers and directors. Kaganovich insisted that “the earth should tremble when the director walks around the plant.”<sup>29</sup> Managers generated pressure that was transmitted down through the system. Grigorii (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze, who headed Vesenkha from 1930, is a paradigmatic example of the “fixer” or “pusher” (*tolkach*), a type who could also have been found in the entourage of Chinggis Khan or Peter the Great.

Without markets to resolve problems of resource allocation, the Soviet economy relied instead on intervention by bureaucratic authority. Ordzhonikidze’s fiendish

appetite for work and his ability to find and motivate capable subordinates allowed him to alleviate but not fully eliminate many of the chronic distribution problems the Soviet economy faced. Memoirs of Ordzhonikidze's term at Vesenkha and later at the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry never fail to mention his prodigious capacity for working late into the night, calling factory directors personally to demand results or to order scarce construction materials shipped to a particularly vital project.<sup>30</sup>

The role of fixers such as Ordzhonikidze illustrates the importance of sheer pressure in the Soviet mobilizational drive. As Stalin once told Voroshilov during a routine industrial crisis, "We'll put some pressure on and help them adapt."<sup>31</sup>

Soviet managerial practices used the time-and-motion ideas of F. W. Taylor, whose methods had impressed Lenin. The government introduced piece-rates, raised work norms, stretched the working day, and cut holidays. Enterprises had immense power over their employees because they did not just pay wages; they also allocated flats and ration cards, so that being fired could deprive you of wages, apartment, and food. In 1930 the government abolished unemployment pay, on the grounds that unemployment no longer existed, and it was indeed true that the government's insatiable demand for labor provided plenty of work.

The government mobilized money with equal determination, by shifting resources from consumption to investment. In 1928, about 82 percent of national income was consumed by households; in 1937 just 55 percent, which represents one of the fastest recorded declines in consumption in the modern era.<sup>32</sup> Despite rapid growth in the urban population, the government spent little on new housing. Urban living conditions deteriorated, as more and more people crowded into small, badly built, poorly equipped communal apartments. In Moscow, in 1935, 6 percent of renting families occupied more than one room, 40 percent had a single room, 24 percent occupied part of a room, 5 percent lived in kitchens and corridors, and 25 percent lived in dormitories.<sup>33</sup> Conditions in provincial towns were much worse, particularly in new towns such as Magnitogorsk, where for many years most people lived in temporary barracks or even in dugouts or tents, with no clean water, no proper sewerage system, and little heating during the cruel steppe winters. Many tried to survive by keeping cows in the cities. In 1932, an inhabitant of Aktiubinsk in Kazakhstan wrote to *Pravda*:

Do the local authorities have the right to forcibly take away the only cow of industrial and office workers? ... How can you live when the cooperative distributes only black bread and at the market, goods have the prices of 1919 and 1920? Lice have eaten us to death, and soap is given only to railroad workers. From hunger and filth, we have a massive outbreak of spotted fever.<sup>34</sup>

In 1936, the deputy director of a factory complained about a recent arrival in a factory dormitory who had brought chickens into the dorm.

Perhaps it is possible to bring in chickens, cows and pigs. But then it will be a barn, and not only in the room because the chickens also block up the corridor. It's not necessary to have chickens walking around in the corridor.<sup>35</sup>

In the early and mid-1930s, the rural population paid for industrialization by surrendering the grain they produced at knock-down prices. The urban population paid through low wages and high taxes on basic necessities, from vodka to matches and salt, as well as sustained pressure to buy government bonds.

But the Soviet system invited collaboration as well as coercing it. The mobilization of both skilled and unskilled labor depended on rewards and opportunities as well as on threats. You could earn bonuses for over-fulfillment, and Alexei Stakhanov, the Donbas coal miner who produced 14 times his planned output with the support of a team of colleagues and some judicious cheating, became a national hero.<sup>36</sup> Many, particularly from poor rural backgrounds, found new opportunities in the 1930s, and these help explain the system's ability to generate enthusiastic support from many of its citizens. There was great social mobility so that, despite appalling conditions, many found the material and sometimes the spiritual quality of their lives improved.<sup>37</sup> For peasants, the opportunities and glitter of town life offered a sharp contrast to the bleak monotony of life on collective farms. In the second half of the 1930s, conditions stabilized in the countryside and living standards began to rise in the towns. Average real wages rose during the second Five-Year Plan (1932–1937), and the supply of consumer goods increased. Besides, government expenditures on social welfare, on medical and educational services, on crèches, canteens, and laundries, though grossly inadequate, did make a difference. Hundreds of thousands of working-class Russians also moved into positions of privilege and influence they could not have dreamed of in the Tsarist era.

Genuine enthusiasm played an important role in the industrialization drive. It was encouraged by the press, but also by a widespread conviction that Soviet industrialization, for all the chaos and hardship, was creating a new world. As in a battle, even the hardships could be inspiring. John Scott wrote:

In Magnitogorsk I was precipitated into a battle. I was deployed on the iron and steel front. Tens of thousands of people were enduring the most intense hardships in order to build blast furnaces, and many of them did it willingly, with boundless enthusiasm, which infected me from the day of my arrival.<sup>38</sup>

Propaganda helped. Ever since the October Revolution, the Communist Party had understood the political and ideological power of modern mass media – the press, the cinema, literature, and the radio. In the 1930s, in a partial compromise with the traditional values of its mainly working-class citizens and officials, the government abandoned the radical social and cultural ideas of the early Bolsheviks. It began to support traditional family values, abolished the right to abortion, and made divorce more difficult. History syllabi dropped their focus on class history and told more engaging patriotic stories of great individuals and historical events. Nicholas Timasheff described this return to more traditional values as “the Great Retreat.”<sup>39</sup> The combination of Russian patriotism and socialist ideals could generate powerful loyalties. Stalin's comments in a 1937 article celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the revolution would have resonated with many Soviet citizens:

The Russian tsars did many bad things. They plundered and enslaved the people. They waged wars and grabbed territory in the interests of the landowners. But they did do one good thing – they created a huge state that stretches all the way to Kamchatka. We have inherited that state. And for the first time we, the Bolsheviks, have brought together and consolidated this state as a single, indivisible state ... for the benefit of the workers.<sup>40</sup>

The government invested heavily in education. Between 1926 and the late 1930s, literacy rates rose from about 40 percent to about 75 percent. Among the young, they may have risen to 90 percent. Because the government believed women were crucial to the education of the very young, it supported women's education, particularly in rural areas, so that, by the late 1930s, literacy rates among women may have reached 80 percent.<sup>41</sup>

Introducing new ideas meant suppressing traditional ideas and customs. Officially atheist, in 1924 the government established a "League of Atheists." After the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1924 (the Patriarchy had been restored in 1918), the Soviet government did not allow the election of a successor until 1943. In the early 1930s the Soviet government discriminated against all major religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. In Siberia in the 1920s, government officials confiscated costumes and drums of shamans. Shamans, in turn, fought back against Soviet medical and educational reforms, which threatened their traditional roles as healers and teachers.

The money, labor, and resources mobilized by the Stalinist government paid for the new technologies of the industrial era. Ideas, innovations, and scientific procedures developed first in the capitalist world played a critical role in Soviet industrialization, because Soviet enterprise managers, like Muscovite merchants, were too hemmed in by the state to introduce major innovations on their own initiative. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union had inherited a modest but rather good tradition of science and technology from the Tsarist era. And within the constraints of the Soviet system, Soviet engineers, scientists, and even managers often showed great creativity as they adapted western technologies to Soviet conditions, often in environments of extreme stress.

The Soviet government mobilized foreign technologies above all for the army. It bought foreign technologies, as its agents "combed European and American military establishments, weapons labs, and technical institutes in order to divine the secrets of up-to-date Western arms."<sup>42</sup> It also engaged in industrial espionage on a huge scale. By the 1930s, Soviet leaders assumed that the best technologies could be found in the USA. The Gorkii car plant was modeled on Ford's River Rouge works, and the iron and steel factories of Magnitogorsk were modeled on the United States Steel Works of Gary, Indiana, and designed by Arthur McKee and Co. of Cleveland, Ohio, specialists in building blast furnaces.<sup>43</sup> In the early 1930s, the Soviet government spent huge amounts on research and development, with some spectacular results, particularly in military technology. Soviet designers sometimes improved significantly on their original models. Soviet airframes, for example, were of the highest quality and the Soviet Union was the first country to produce polybutadiene synthetic rubber.

By the late 1930s, Soviet factories were making some of the best tanks in the world. The process began with the reverse engineering of French tanks designed by Renault and captured during the Civil War. In late 1929, the Politburo sent a government mission abroad with direct orders from Stalin to (in Voroshilov's words) "take all measures, spend the money, even large amounts of money, run people to all corners of Europe and America, but get models, plans, bring in people, do everything possible and impossible in order to set up tank production here."<sup>44</sup> In 1930, the mission returned with American and British designs that would provide the basis for the Soviet T-34, T-26, and T-27 tanks. In February 1932, Ordzhonikidze was put in charge of Soviet tank production. Soviet tanks ran on diesel rather than gasoline, which proved important in World War II because captured supplies of Soviet diesel oil were useless for German tanks.<sup>45</sup>

The systematic adaptation of foreign technologies to mobilize Inner Eurasian resources is a pattern we have already seen in the Mongol era, with the spread of gunpowder technologies to Muscovy, and during the industrialization drive of the nineteenth century. Alexander Herzen once imagined a peasant revolution creating a Chinggis Khan armed with the telegraph, and Trotsky is supposed to have described Stalin as Chinggis Khan with a telephone. Whoever originated it, the metaphor is precise. Radios, tanks, and nuclear power were to Stalin what writing, siege engines, and cannon were to Chinggis Khan: expensive but formidable technologies that could be bought, adapted, and used by a sufficiently powerful mobilization system.

Foreign technologies were particularly important in helping unlock the Soviet Union's vast supplies of energy. Today, the Russian Federation is the leading producer of hydrocarbons in the world, but the remote location and poor quality of many energy sources meant that exploiting them was difficult and expensive.<sup>46</sup> Table 14.1 and the two graphs in Figure 14.2 present the same data in different ways to illustrate the importance of different fossil fuels to the Stalinist industrialization drive.

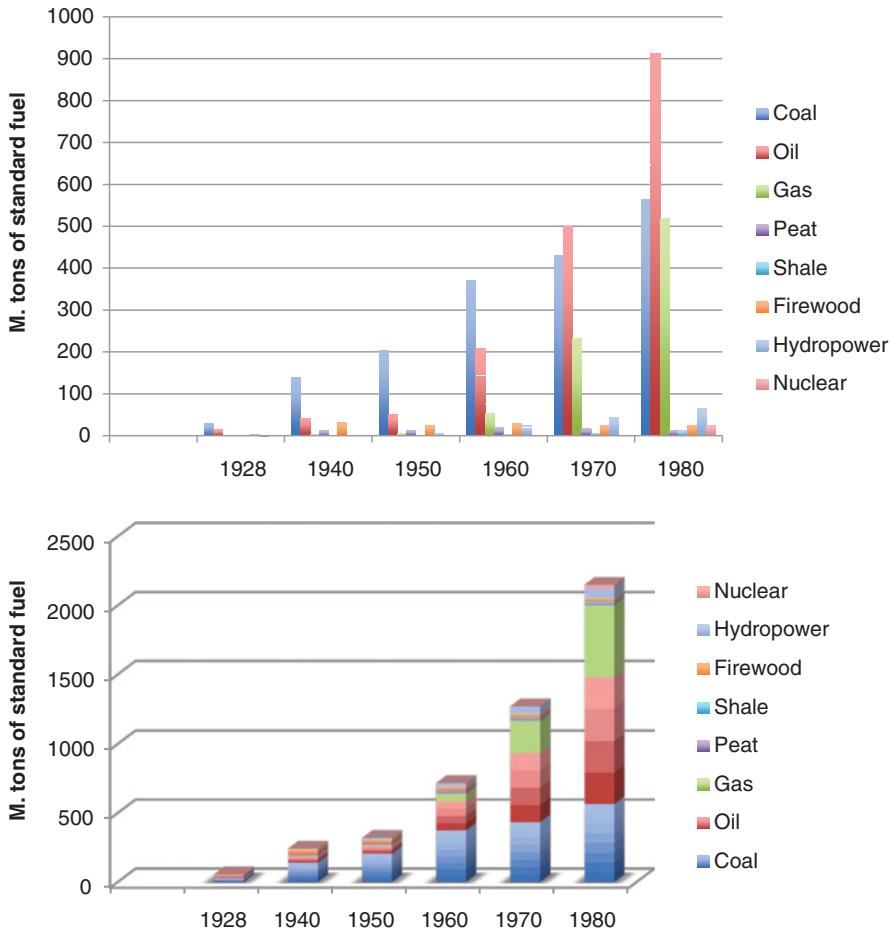
The first thing these figures show is that total energy production in the Soviet Union multiplied by more than 4.5 times in the first 12 years of industrialization, by almost 6 times in just over 20 years, and by about 40 times in the half century between 1928 and 1980. Coal production alone rose by

**Table 14.1** Soviet fuel and energy production and consumption, 1928–1980

Date	Coal	Oil	Gas	Peat	Shale	Firewood	Hydropower	Nuclear	Total energy	Apparent consumption
1928	29.8	16.6	0.4	2.1	n.a.	5.7	0.2	0	54.8	50.9
1940	140.5	44.5	4.4	13.6	0.6	34.1	3.3	0	241	243.3
1950	205.7	54.2	7.3	14.8	1.3	27.9	7.5	0	318.7	328.7
1960	373.1	211.4	54.4	20.4	4.8	28.7	23.8	0	716.6	665.5
1970	432.7	502.5	233.5	17.7	8.8	26.6	45.6	1.3	1267.4	1113.8
1980	565.2	915	519.8	15	13	27	67	27.2	2149.2	

All units in "million tons of standard fuel," the common denominator in Soviet energy accounting: 1 ton of standard fuel =  $7 \times 10^9$  calories.

Source: Campbell, *Soviet Energy Technologies*, Table 1.1. Reproduced with permission of Indiana University Press.

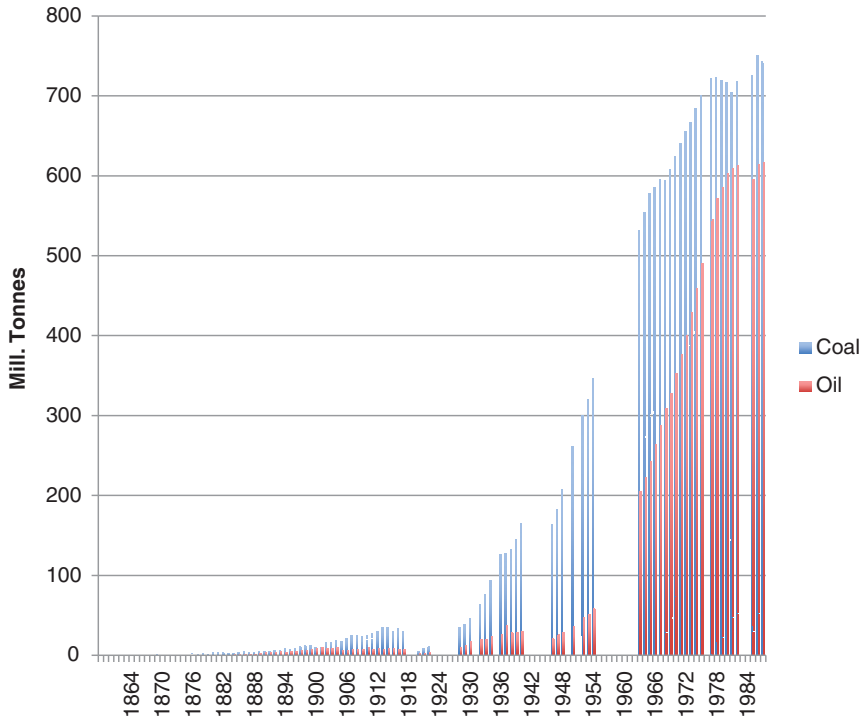


**Figure 14.2** Two charts showing total Soviet energy production, 1928–1980, and relative contribution of different fuels. Based on Campbell, based on *Soviet Energy Technologies*, 10. Reproduced with permission of Indiana University Press.

almost 7 times during the 20 years covered in this chapter, while oil production tripled. Fossil fuels and hydropower brought the Soviet Union into the electric age, as electricity production rose from 3.2 to 31 billion kilowatt hours in the decade before the war.<sup>47</sup> But during the first Five-Year plans, coal was king. Between 1929 and 1940 the Soviet Union opened more than 400 new mines.<sup>48</sup> They played a vital role in industrialization, partly because almost 200 different chemical products are based on coal. Figure 14.3 (which uses slightly different data from Figure 14.2) highlights the sharp increase in the use of fossil fuels from the 1930s, by tracking their production over more than a century. The Soviet Union really committed to fossil fuels only during the first Five-Year plans.

These graphs also highlight the late arrival of the other major fossil fuels: oil and natural gas. Though important in the Stalin era, oil would become





**Figure 14.3** The Soviet Union enters the fossil fuels era: coal and oil production in Russia, 1859–1987. Note that measuring by total weight underestimates the increasing importance of oil, which is a more concentrated source of energy. Table 14.1 shows oil overtaking coal by 1970 because it gives standardized measures of energy production. Data from D’iakonova, *Neft’ i ugol’ v energetike tsarskoi Rossii, 165–167*.

dominant only in the second half of the century, along with natural gas. The slow rise of oil and gas reflects, in part, the difficulty and cost of exploiting oil and gas fields in Siberia and Central Asia, far from the heartland, and often in inaccessible regions with high transportation costs.

### THE STALINIST MOBILIZATIONAL MACHINE

Without a disciplined elite, the Stalinist system could not have contained the extreme pressures of the industrialization drive. It survived because changes in the 1930s increased the tautness of an already tightly coiled mobilizational machine.

Collectivization and the industrialization drive increased the sense of danger in Soviet society as a whole, but particularly within the Soviet nobility, the *nomenklatura*. Collectivization’s war on the peasantry revived the Civil War mood of a besieged garrison. In 1933, Bukharin told a friend that during the Civil War, he had seen

things that I would not want even my enemies to see. Yet 1919 cannot even be compared with what happened between 1930 and 1932. In 1919 we were fighting for our lives. We executed people, but we also risked our lives in the process. In the later period, however, we were conducting a mass annihilation of completely defenceless men, together with their wives and children ... [This experience, he added, had caused] ... deep changes in the psychological outlook of those Communists who participated in this campaign, and instead of going mad, became professional bureaucrats for whom terror was henceforth a normal method of administration and obedience to any order from above a high virtue.

The whole process had caused, he wrote, “a real dehumanization of the people working in the Soviet apparatus.”<sup>49</sup>

Military metaphors flourished in the 1930s, not just because they appealed to Party propagandists, but because they captured the lived experiences of Soviet officials and citizens. Economists talked of production “fronts,” writers of “engineering the human soul” (a phrase of Stalin’s), and journalists of “saboteurs” and “traitors.” A world of battlefronts, of “us” and “them,” discouraged independent thought. Wars were launched on ignorance and religion. Within universities, research institutions, newspapers, and schools, the limited intellectual freedoms of the 1920s were curtailed during the first Five-Year Plan. Marxists replaced non-Marxists, textbooks parroted an increasingly rigid official line, and debate disappeared from the newspapers. It was in this atmosphere, in 1932, that the Party established the basic principles of “socialist realism,” and made all writers join a single Union of Soviet Writers. Culture, too, was being mobilized. Socialist realism demanded that cultural work be judged not mainly by aesthetic criteria, but by its contribution to the building of socialism. Aesthetic judgments were made increasingly by censors and politicians rather than by artists or writers.

Many remained loyal to the Party because it offered the only path to privilege. Elite privileges multiplied in the early 1930s. In 1931 Stalin officially attacked “egalitarianism,” arguing that the best workers and officials deserved higher wages and privileges. Party officials were the first to get train tickets or hotel reservations or apartments or scarce consumer goods. Officials’ importance in the new hierarchy depended on the importance of the organizations they worked for, so police and Party officials usually went to the front of the queue, followed by officials from the army, heavy industry then light industry, union organizations, and educational organizations.

In Magnitogorsk, a special suburb was built for foreign specialists, as in nineteenth-century Yuzovka. It was known as Amerikanka, but its name changed to Berezka when Soviet bosses moved in. In a city where many still lived in tents and dugouts (Figure 14.4), Berezka had large, independent cottages with indoor toilets and special restaurants. Avraamii Zaveniagin, the city’s director in 1933, built several large houses for himself and his close colleagues, using American designs to create a suburb modeled on Mount Vernon in Washington, DC. It was enclosed with walls and protected by armed guards.

Along with the factory director on the new street lived the city party secretary, the chief of the Magnitogorsk security police ... the factory’s chief engineer ...



**Figure 14.4** Tent city, with Magnetic Mountain in the background: Magnitogorsk, winter 1930. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*. Reproduced with permission of University of California Press.

the chiefs of various shops, the chief engineer of the mine, and the factory's chief electrician (the latter two were valued "prisoner" specialists in exile).<sup>50</sup>

For such people, the rhetoric of working-class power had real substance.

In the early 1930s, the multiple dangers of war with the peasantry, the metaphorical war for industrialization, and the prospect of future wars with capitalist rivals combined to reinforce the cohesion, power, and authority of the Party and its leaders. In 1933 a correspondent told Trotsky that even the surviving old Bolsheviks, though they hated and feared Stalin, would often add that, "If it were not for that (we omit their strong epithet for him) ... everything would have fallen to pieces by now. It is he who keeps everything together."<sup>51</sup> On his last trip abroad in 1936, Bukharin told the exiled Mensheviks, Lydia and Fedor Dan, that Stalin was "a small, wicked man ... no, not a man, a devil." But he added,

He [Stalin] is something like the symbol of the party. The rank-and-file workers, the people believe him. We are probably responsible for it ourselves ... and this is why we are all ... crawling into his jaws knowing for sure that he will devour us.<sup>52</sup>

Such thinking paralyzed Stalin's opponents. But in the early 1930s there were still limits to Stalin's power. In 1932, when Stalin heard of an internal Party

document proposing that he be removed from power, he demanded the execution of its author, an ex-partisan commander, M. N. Riutin (1890–1937). The Politburo opposed him and he had to settle for Riutin's imprisonment instead. In the early 1930s, Stalin's power was still based largely on the Party, and that limited his power.

But in the mid-1930s, his lieutenants let Stalin escape even these modest checks on his power. In December 1934, a disgruntled communist, Nikolaev, murdered Sergei Kirov (1886–1934), the leader of the Leningrad party, in his headquarters at Smolny, from where the October Revolution had been launched 17 years earlier. There is no evidence for Khrushchev's suggestion that Stalin ordered Kirov's murder, but Stalin did exploit the assassination skillfully to increase the sense of danger and enhance his own power. On his personal authority, he issued new orders for dealing with terrorism. The so-called Kirov decrees created special tribunals to try suspected terrorists, ordered terrorist cases to be dealt with within 10 days, denied the accused defense counsel, denied any right of appeal in terrorist cases, and required that death penalties be carried out immediately after sentencing. Stalin's decree was published in *Pravda* before it was discussed by the Politburo. Two days later, the Politburo lamely endorsed this judicial revolution, effectively conceding that Stalin's personal authority now exceeded that of the Party. The Kirov laws provided the legal justification for the purges of the late 1930s, and survived until Stalin's death in 1953.

Much of the muscle of the Stalinist system was provided by its police agencies. The first Soviet police institution, the Cheka, was created just after the October Revolution. In 1921, the Cheka was replaced by a smaller and less powerful institution, the "State Political Administration" (GPU). In the late 1920s, the government increased the size and powers of the secret police, and in 1927, Stalin demanded that GPU agents be placed in all government offices and army units. He used the GPU during the procurement campaigns and in his conflicts with Party rivals, who were subject to police harassment and arrest once expelled from the Party.

The power and reach of police organizations grew rapidly after 1929. An expanded and better-funded GPU supervised the deportation of *kulaks* and their families during the collectivization drive. In 1930, a new organization was created to supervise the labor camp population, which grew from 30,000 in 1928 to 300,000 in 1930 and more than 500,000 by 1934.<sup>53</sup> This was GULAG, or the "Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps," the organization that would manage the vast system of some 476 labor camps that emerged in the Stalin era.<sup>54</sup> In 1934, the secret police and GULAG were absorbed within an expanded "People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs," the NKVD. For the next 20 years, this huge organization managed the vast machinery of internal coercion. Nevertheless, we should not exaggerate its power or size. In the mid-1930s, there were only half as many police of all kinds as there had been at the end of the Tsarist era.<sup>55</sup>

The Kirov laws allowed Stalin to break one of the few remaining limits on his power: the taboo against using the secret police against Party members. Previously, Party members had normally been protected from police interference. The new laws effectively placed Stalin's personal decisions beyond any formal legal or institutional constraints, including the Party. Whereas previously political authority had flowed primarily through the Party apparatus, now Stalin or his private Secretariat could issue orders more or less at will, through any channel he chose, including the secret police.

The independence of the Party declined precipitously. Party Congresses had met annually in the 1920s. In the 1930s they became rare and perfunctory. After 1934, only two more met in Stalin's lifetime, in 1939 and 1952. In 1938, formal Politburo meetings were replaced by ad hoc meetings of Party, government, police, or military officials, summoned on Stalin's personal authority. The key figures of the leadership were now the "secret five": Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, and Kaganovich, together with a number of other loyal followers, who had gathered around Stalin during the Party conflicts of the 1920s and in the early 1930s.<sup>56</sup> In May 1941, Stalin became the head of Sovnarkom, the Committee of Ministers, while keeping his previous post as General Secretary of the Party. This put him at the head of the two key drivers of the Soviet polity.<sup>57</sup> Not even his closest and most experienced loyalists could seriously challenge Stalin from the mid-1930s; indeed, they were as vulnerable to arrest as any other Soviet citizen. What had been a Party dictatorship became a personal dictatorship, as there was no longer any point at which major decisions could be resolved below Stalin himself.

Between 1936 and 1939, there took place a massive purge of the ruling elite, reminiscent, in its scale and brutality, of the *oprichnina* of Ivan the Terrible.<sup>58</sup> Stalin's sponsorship of Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible* suggests that he understood the parallels. The most visible signs of the purges were a series of show trials, organized with great theatricality in 1936, 1937, and 1938. They subjected former leaders of the October Revolution to public humiliation before condemning them to death. Victims included Stalin's closest Bolshevik comrades, such as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and Rykov. They also included military and political leaders of the Civil War, such as Marshal Tukhachevskii, the leader of the Red Army who did much to reform the Soviet army in the early 1930s, and two leaders of the NKVD, Yagoda and Ezhov. Ezhov's arrest and execution in 1939 marked the end of the most violent phase of the purges, though low-level purges continued for the rest of Stalin's rule.

As Oleg Khlevniuk has shown on the basis of archival materials released in the 1990s, there can now be no doubt about Stalin's personal role in the purges. He really did believe his opponents formed a "fifth column" that threatened the entire Soviet project, and he personally signed thousands of death warrants.

[W]ithout Stalin's orders, the Great Terror simply would not have taken place, and the mass repressions ... would have remained at the normal or slightly elevated level that was seen in the mid-1930s and again from 1939 until Stalin's death.<sup>59</sup>

The purges were driven partly by Stalin's increasing paranoia, but also by the very real threat of war. The Soviet Union was born in war and civil war, and members of the Soviet elite knew how many dangerous enemies they had inside and outside the country. In the late 1930s, the threat of German or Japanese attacks increased. But the government feared attacks from within as much as attacks from abroad. In a speech to the Central Committee plenum of early 1937, Stalin said,

Winning a battle in time of war takes several corps of Red Army soldiers. But reversing that victory at the front requires just a few spies somewhere in army headquarters or even division headquarters, able to steal the battle plans and give them to the enemy. To build a major railway bridge would take thousands of people. But to blow it up, just a few people would be enough.<sup>60</sup>

During the Spanish Civil War, between 1936 and 1939, Stalin interpreted the failures of the Soviet-backed Spanish Republican armies as daily proof of these internal dangers. Many years later, in his memoirs, Kaganovich still described the 1937 purges as a pre-emptive strike against a dangerous Fascist "fifth column" inside the country.<sup>61</sup> But the government's paranoia also arose from the difficulty of getting real information. Not only was the Stalinist government short of officials and police, it was also short of real information because its methods ensured that most officials hid the truth from their superiors most of the time. One scholar has written that: "Under Stalin's dictatorship, the Soviet state was basically blind."<sup>62</sup>

Below the surface of the purges, as the government flailed around in search of real or imagined enemies, a vicious pre-emptive war killed or imprisoned millions. Proportionately, the elite suffered most. By 1939, at least 200,000 Party members had been executed, and over 65 percent of the army's high command. At lower levels, relatives and friends of victims suffered, as well as many totally innocent people, some the victims of personal quarrels, some simply caught up in the cogs and flywheels of the Stalinist mobilizational machine. Solzhenitsyn reports a case from Novochoerkassk of a woman who visited the local police to ask what she should do about a child whose parents had been arrested, and was herself arrested to fulfill the NKVD's latest quota for arrests.<sup>63</sup> The government deliberately whipped up paranoia about internal enemies, and encouraged denunciations on suspicion.

Driving the purges were specific orders to the NKVD to remove "anti-Soviet elements" and members of suspect nationalities. The orders assigned local quotas for arrests, imprisonment, and executions. Having received their quotas, local NKVD officials would summon meetings of local officials and hand out their own quotas, mostly based on the large police files of "anti-Soviet elements." Those arrested were often tortured to obtain confessions about other potentially anti-Soviet elements.<sup>64</sup> According to KGB archives, over 780,000 people were executed between 1931 and 1953, the vast majority in 1937 and 1938. However, there can be little doubt that many deaths went unrecorded, so this counts as a low estimate.<sup>65</sup> The prison camp population rose from 500,000 in 1934 to about 1.2 million in 1937 and almost 2 million in 1941.<sup>66</sup> In all,

some 8 million people may have spent some time in the camps before 1940.<sup>67</sup> Conditions in the camps were so appalling that annual death rates of 3.5–7 percent were normal, and in some years, such as 1939 and during the war, as many as 10 percent of inmates may have died each year.<sup>68</sup> However, by any calculations, the purges did not kill nearly as many people as the collectivization famines of 1932–1933.

Like Mongke's purge of Guyug's supporters in 1252, this was not a war of conquest but an elite blood-letting, designed to eliminate dissidents and temper a new leadership group even as it caught up many innocent victims. Party members themselves understood its harsh logic. Lev Kopelev, who was arrested in 1945 while serving with the army in Germany, wrote that in prison, his support for Stalin never wavered. "[I] believed that the generals, the men of the N.K.V.D., the judge and the jailers were all blood of my blood, bone of my bone; that we were all soldiers in one army."<sup>69</sup> If anything, the chaos and the stresses of the 1930s enhanced the ruling elite's sense of unity and discipline. As Moshe Lewin put it:

The creation of a hierarchical scaffolding of dedicated bosses, held together by discipline, privilege and power, was a deliberate strategy of social engineering to help stabilise the flux. It was born, therefore, in conditions of stress, mass disorganization, and social warfare, and the bosses were actually asked to see themselves as commanders in a battle. The Party wanted the bosses to be efficient, powerful, harsh, impetuous, and capable of exerting pressure crudely and ruthlessly and getting results, "whatever the cost."<sup>70</sup>

Sheila Fitzpatrick has emphasized another aspect of the purges: they made room for a new generation of leaders, totally loyal to Stalin. By 1939, and largely because of the rapid turnover of personnel caused by the purges, many of the *vydvizhentsy*, the working-class experts trained in the late 1920s, reached the upper ranks of the Party and government. Their youth, their limited formal education, their Civil War experiences, and their relatively impoverished backgrounds ensured that they would make tough, loyal, energetic, and disciplined subordinates.

Aleksei Kosygin (1904–1980) is representative of the entire generation.<sup>71</sup> Born in the first decade of the century, he joined the Red Army during the Civil War, attended a technical college in the early 1920s, worked in cooperative organizations in Siberia, and joined the Party in 1927. In 1931, as one of the *vydvizhentsy*, he was sent to the Leningrad Textile Institute. When he graduated, in 1935, he rose fast. By 1937 he was director of a textile factory; by 1938 he headed the executive committee of the Leningrad city Soviet; and in 1939, at the age of 35, he became People's Commissar (Minister) for light industry for the entire Soviet Union. He would stay at the top of the system until his death in 1980. Nikita Khrushchev was another representative of this generation. Lazar Kaganovich, though not strictly a *vydvizhenets*, as he rose to power through the Party Secretariat, was perhaps the last survivor from this generation. He was born in 1893 to a poor Jewish family from Chernobyl in Ukraine, and died in July 1991, just six months before the collapse of the Soviet

Union.<sup>72</sup> In 1925, he became first secretary of the Ukrainian party, and played an active role in suppressing resistance to collectivization. In the 1930s, he managed the building of the Moscow subway, and subsequently managed the railway system and heavy industry.

As Sheila Fitzpatrick has shown, members of Kosygin's generation would shape Soviet history from the 1930s until the system collapsed in 1991. They included Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982), Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971), Dmitrii Ustinov (1908–1984), and Andrei Kirilenko (1906–1982). In the early 1980s, 50 percent of Politburo members came from this group. Those who rose to the top during the 1930s were to Stalin what Chinggis Khan's *keleshig* had been: a loyal and disciplined body of followers who owed everything to their leader, who understood mobilization, and had the energy, determination, and ruthlessness needed to do whatever had to be done in a time of great danger and spectacular opportunities.

### *BENEFITS AND COSTS: MOBILIZATION V. EFFICIENCY*

Mobilization is not the same as efficiency, and there can be no doubt that the Soviet mobilizational system wasted colossal human, material, and financial resources. As in the mobilizational systems of Muscovy and the steppes, the task of mobilization – finding and deploying enough resources – trumped efficiency – the task of using resources economically. The Stalinist industrialization drive showed that the same mobilizational rules could apply also to the building of a modern fossil fuels-driven industrial society. But the human, material, and financial waste really was colossal. John Scott wrote of his time in Magnitogorsk:

Semi-trained workers were unable to operate the complicated machines which had been erected. Equipment was ruined, men were crushed, gassed, and poisoned, money was spent in astronomical quantities. The men were replaced by new ones from the villages, the money was made good by the State in government subsidies, and the materials and supplies were found somehow.<sup>73</sup>

The army complained that 40 percent of machine guns produced in 1930 had to be returned to the factories for retooling. No wonder. The factories often got around inspectors by wining and dining them lavishly. In 1933, a Vesenkha official reported that

at Factory #8 of the Artillery-Arsenal Association and at the Tula Armaments Factory a system was established of entertaining visiting representatives of the ... Commissariat of Heavy Industry, and the NKVM [Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs] with meals, dinners, and drinking bouts on business trips, [creating] the danger that as a result the army might receive and [quality-control inspectors] might pass substandard production.<sup>74</sup>



The official concerned recommended banning the sale of liquor in factory restaurants, and Ordzhonikidze backed him.

The important question for Soviet agencies and managers was: did they have enough labor, energy, and resources to get the job done? And the most effective managers and Party bosses generally got what they needed by hoarding resources so that they had reserves of labor, cash, and materials in a crisis. That often got the job done, but at huge cost.

Measuring the scale and efficiency of Soviet industrialization is not easy. Available statistics are not detailed or reliable enough to allow great precision. However, the opening of Soviet archives after 1991 has shown that Soviet statistics, despite an element of propaganda, were not wildly inaccurate. This is not surprising. After all, the statistics used by Soviet propagandists were also used by Soviet economists, managers, and planners. As Joseph Berliner argues, the archives suggest that the western researchers who worked with Soviet-era statistics “had got it largely right.”<sup>75</sup>

But, however accurate they were, interpreting Soviet statistics is not easy, partly because rapid technological change altered the nature and value of what was being measured. How can one compare the respective values of tractors and horses? It is hard to measure changing output either in physical terms, because the goods themselves changed, or in value terms, because the value of the ruble also changed. As the output of machinery increased in the 1930s, its value fell relative to that of more traditional products, so that calculations based on 1928 prices suggest more rapid industrial growth than calculations based on 1937 prices. Furthermore, prices set arbitrarily by planners and insulation from global markets make value comparisons with other countries difficult. In what follows we will rely on some of the most careful computations of Soviet economic growth in the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> Where they reveal very large changes we can have some confidence in them, and for our purposes it is the large changes that are most telling.

In 1928, agriculture still accounted for 48 percent of national income, or slightly less than in 1913; by 1940, agriculture’s share of national income had fallen to about 30 percent.<sup>77</sup> Industry, construction, and transport together accounted for about 32 percent in 1913, and about 28 percent in 1928. By 1940, they accounted for about 46 percent of national income. Employment figures show an equally significant shift in the relative importance of different sectors. In 1926, about 72 percent of the workforce was employed in agriculture, and 6.3 percent in industry, building, and transport. By 1939, only 48 percent was employed in agriculture, while the numbers in industry, building, and transport had risen to 24 percent.<sup>78</sup>

Soviet estimates suggest that by 1940 Soviet national income was more than six times as large as in 1913 and five times as large as in 1928.<sup>79</sup> These figures set an upper limit to available estimates, and it is striking that they roughly match the increase in energy from fossil fuels. The most influential western estimates, those of Abram Bergson, are lower; they suggest that national income in 1940 was 2.75 times the 1928 level if one uses 1928 prices, and 1.6 times that level using 1937 prices.<sup>80</sup>

Should we be impressed by these changes? At a time when most capitalist economies were in the doldrums of the Great Depression, the Soviet achievements looked impressive. And whatever the statistics tell us, the Soviet performance in World War II shows that something really did change. By the end of the war, the Soviet Union had been transformed into a modern military superpower.

But, as this suggests, the achievements were concentrated mainly in defense and heavy industry. Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to describe the industrialization drive as an “armaments” drive. The entire economy was put on a war footing, particularly after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931. Industrial production shifted into new areas, of which the most important were armaments, automotive industries, machine tools, and electrification. The number of artillery units produced rose from just under 1,000 in 1929/30 to 15,000 in 1940. In the same period tank production rose from 170 per annum to 2,794, and aircraft production from 899 to 10,565.<sup>81</sup> Defense accounted for only 2.6 percent of industrial production in 1930 but for 22 percent in 1940.<sup>82</sup> Growth was less impressive in consumer goods industries, and there was no significant growth in agricultural output. Though urban living standards may have improved slightly in the middle 1930s, as a whole real wages probably declined by somewhere between 17 percent and 43 percent between 1928 and 1937.<sup>83</sup>

Though efficiency was not the primary goal of Soviet industrialization, attempts to measure its efficiency illustrate the dominant role of direct mobilization. To what extent did the industrialization drive depend on raw mobilization of hitherto unused resources, and to what extent on using those resources more efficiently? One very general measure of efficiency is GNP per head, or gross national production divided by population. Calculating this statistic is difficult, but the most recent attempts suggest that, while production per head did not rise at all between 1913 and 1928, between 1928 and 1937 it rose by 60 percent, though it stagnated in the years before the war.<sup>84</sup> Between 1928 and 1937, when Soviet rates of growth were fastest, Soviet gross domestic product (GDP, which is more or less interchangeable with GNP) per head rose from about 19–32 percent of the US level, from 29–40 percent of the UK level, from 40–53 percent of the German level, and from 78–108 percent of the Japanese level. Particularly interesting is the comparison with Japan, whose GDP per head in 1913 was similar to that of the Soviet Union, though it had embarked on a capitalist path of industrialization.<sup>85</sup>

However, estimates of GDP per head are at least in part measures of direct mobilization, as more Soviet workers worked harder than ever before with new types of equipment and increased energy inputs from fossil fuels. Other statistics show better the extent to which mobilization trumped efficiency. If outputs are divided by a measure of inputs in the form of labor, capital, and land, the result is a quantity known as “total factor productivity,” or TFP. The growth of TFP over time offers a notional measure of “that part of economic growth attributable to increased efficiency of technology and resource allocation.”<sup>86</sup> While different attempts to estimate changes in total factor productivity between 1928 and 1940 give different results, they suggest the same

general conclusion: mobilization was much more important than increasing productivity.<sup>87</sup> Improved efficiency counts, on the best estimates, for no more than 24 percent of growth in this period, and probably much less, perhaps as little as 2 percent.<sup>88</sup> The productivity of labor may have increased as people worked harder than ever before, but the efficiency with which capital, resources, and energy were used probably declined, as the government solved its most urgent problems by throwing more and more resources at them.

The calculations of Paul Gregory suggest that raw mobilization played a much greater role in the Soviet industrialization drive than in the late Tsarist era. Gregory argues that, “faster input growth ‘explains’ the entire growth differential between the Soviet and tsarist eras.” In both periods, growth was “extensive”; it depended largely on increased inputs. However, “In the tsarist case, 70 percent of growth was accounted for by the expansion of factor inputs; in the Soviet case, a higher 84 percent was accounted for by factor inputs. Although the margin of error in these estimates could be substantial, tsarist productivity appears to have grown faster than Soviet productivity.”<sup>89</sup> If correct, these conclusions are surely linked to the fact that the Tsarist industrialization drive used both direct mobilization and market forces to drive growth, while Soviet industrialization depended almost entirely on mobilization.

In other words, it makes sense to regard Soviet industrialization as the result of a massive mobilizational drive. Most technological innovations came from outside the system, which means that when the flow of major innovations dried up, the system was bound to stagnate. Robert Lewis argues that as early as the late 1930s, “The Soviet Union had started to slide into a situation where, across much of the economy, substantial further technical modernization only occurred piecemeal and intermittently in response to central drives to modernize particular areas.”<sup>90</sup> As R. W. Davies writes,

By the end of the 1930s it was already becoming apparent that the system which had managed to bring about technological revolution and economic growth from above was incapable, without drastic reform, of encouraging technological innovation from below. [This] deficiency, ... ultimately proved fatal for the Soviet economic system.<sup>91</sup>

## *THE “GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR” AND ITS AFTERMATH: 1941–1953*

During World War I all combatant governments leaned heavily on strategies of direct mobilization, because such strategies work well in the crisis of war, when getting the job done fast was more important than getting the job done efficiently. During the 1930s, Soviet citizens got used to warlike crises, to campaigns, to emergencies, to sudden, unexpected demands, and to danger.

Ever since 1931 – wrote John Scott – the Soviet Union has been at war, and the people have been sweating, shedding blood and tears. People were wounded and killed, women and children froze to death, millions starved, thousands were

court-martialed and shot in the campaigns of collectivization and industrialization. I would wager that Russia's battle of ferrous metallurgy alone involved more casualties than the battle of the Marne. All during the thirties the Russian people were at war.<sup>92</sup>

Industrialization Soviet-style prepared Soviet citizens well for total war. The "Great Patriotic War," as World War II was called in the Soviet Union, provided the first major military test of the Stalinist mobilizational system.

## THE TEST OF WAR

All members of the Soviet Communist Party knew that their achievements would eventually be tested in war. The Great Patriotic War began on June 22, 1941, when the armies of Nazi Germany and its allies crossed the Soviet borders with 5.5 million men, 5,000 planes, 2,500 tanks, and 600,000 motor vehicles, along a 2,000-kilometer front stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

How ready was the Soviet Union? Unlike Tsarist Russia in 1914, or the principalities that faced Batu's invasion in 1237, the Soviet Union had a strong, united, and disciplined government. And it turned out, to the surprise of many (perhaps even Stalin), that it could also command the loyalty of most of its subjects. The industrialization drive had laid the foundations for a large defense establishment and the system had exceptional experience of mobilizing in a crisis. It was well designed for the emergency of war.

However, there were also serious weaknesses, some self-inflicted, and it was these that tempted Hitler to gamble on a war of two fronts. The Soviet army had been modernized fast in the 1930s, but the purges had removed many of its best commanders and military engineers, and demoralized those left behind. Many commanders had little experience when the war began, and most Soviet pilots and tank crews had just a few hours of training. Much Soviet military equipment was sub-standard, and the army had little motorized transport; in 1941, the Red Army still used horses to haul much of its artillery and heavy equipment. The chaos of the purge era had slowed production in crucial areas such as oil, iron, and steel. The German General Staff concluded after analyzing the Soviet army's poor performance against Finland in 1939 that it would collapse under a determined assault. Hitler commented, "You have only to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down!"<sup>93</sup>

Stalin himself made serious blunders. He shared Hitler's assessment of Soviet military prospects, so he did everything he could to postpone a conflict. Apparently on Hitler's initiative, Germany and the USSR signed a non-aggression pact on August 23, 1939. In secret protocols this carved up eastern Europe, giving Germany a free hand in Poland, and effectively restoring to the USSR much of the territory lost in 1918 in the Baltic region and western Ukraine. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, Britain and France declared war on Germany, and the Soviet army marched into eastern Poland and western Ukraine, and forced the Baltic states to sign military pacts effectively placing them under Soviet protection. In 1940, the Soviet Union took

control of the Baltic states. Finland was invaded in November 1939 after refusing to sign a similar pact, but the Soviet army soon got bogged down in a brutal border war.

In the newly occupied territories, the Soviet government immediately launched purges of possible anti-Soviet elements. They shot over 20,000 Polish officers at Katyn in April and May of 1940, and removed 370,000 people to the Soviet Union. But up to the moment of Germany's invasion on June 22, 1941, anti-Nazi sentiment was treated as a crime, and the USSR kept supplying Nazi Germany with oil, grain, and other strategic goods, as required under the Nazi–Soviet pact. Stalin even refused to prepare defensive plans, and ignored the accumulating evidence of an imminent attack. As late as June 16, 1941, he described an intelligence report on an attack as “disinformation, not a ‘source’.” Given the huge number of such reports, he may often have been right.<sup>94</sup>

As a result, the Soviet army was utterly unprepared for the attack when it came. According to the Army Chief of Staff, Georgii Zhukov, when informed of the attack at 3 a.m. on June 22, Stalin insisted the attack was a “provocation by the German military” that did not reflect Hitler's intentions, so he ordered Soviet troops *not* to open fire.<sup>95</sup> Most commanders obeyed, waiting for hours before receiving permission to return fire. German sources reported that 1,500 Soviet planes were destroyed on the ground because they had not received permission to take off.<sup>96</sup> Further, as a result of the Nazi–Soviet pact, the Soviet Union had advanced well beyond the fortified lines prepared along its 1939 borders. Economically, too, there were serious failings. Though Soviet planners had talked of relocating industry away from the frontiers, most industry remained around Leningrad and Moscow and in the Ukraine.

These failures help explain the catastrophic defeats in the second half of 1941. The Red Army lost over 5 million killed, wounded, or captured in the first five months of the war, some 60 percent of its productive capacity in crucial areas such as coal, iron, and steel production, and about 40 percent of its rail network.<sup>97</sup> German forces occupied the Donbass and Moscow coal fields, halving Soviet coal production.<sup>98</sup> By November 1941, Soviet industrial production had fallen to less than half the level of the previous year. By December, German troops were close to Leningrad and Moscow, and had conquered the Baltic, eastern Poland, and the Ukraine. No Russian state had suffered such a catastrophic defeat since the Time of Troubles. The initial collapse was so total that even Stalin himself momentarily despaired.

But Stalin and his government kept their nerve. During the catastrophic first few months, the government began a new mobilization of resources and people that would eventually grind down Germany's armies. Ferocious discipline was imposed within the army, so that retreating armies put up fierce resistance. Stalin spoke to the nation on July 3, admitting something of the scale of the disaster, demanding the creation of militia units and describing some of the measures being taken for defense. On June 24 a special committee was set up to evacuate industries from near the front. By November, over 1,500 entire factories had been dismantled and transported by rail to the Urals, western Siberia, the Volga region, and Central Asia, along with 10 million workers and

evacuees.<sup>99</sup> By the middle of 1942, most of these factories were producing again. This was an astonishing achievement. The government also built new industries away from the Soviet heartland, in Siberia and Central Asia.

Civilian factories converted to munitions production, and the percentage of GDP devoted to defense rose from about 18 percent in 1940 to an astonishing 70 percent in 1942, after which foreign supplies began to ease the burden, reaching almost 20 percent of Soviet GDP in 1943 and 1944.<sup>100</sup> There were remarkable displays of patriotism from soldiers and civilians. Some 420,000 men were mobilized from labor camps in 1941, and most fought bravely and loyally for the Red Army, though the presence in their rear of special units of *Smersh* (“Death to Spies”) with machine guns aimed at deserters helped maintain discipline. Civilians in munitions factories worked long hours on starvation rations. In Leningrad they worked under enemy bombardment. Mobilization for war undermined civilian production so that many people had to grow their own food in allotments, or planted crops in public parks, “laying the groundwork for the dacha socialism of later years.”<sup>101</sup>

At times, the danger seemed to be of *over-mobilization*, and in the early months of the war, when the government’s slogan was “All for the front!” that danger was significant. Mark Harrison comments, “the civilian economy collapsed, the minimum tolerance limits of society were breached, overworking and undernourishment became widespread, civilian mortality rose, and the infrastructure of war production was undermined.”<sup>102</sup> By 1942, the government had learned that it had to take care of the rear, where it would find the reserves of labor, raw materials, and equipment needed to win the war.

The first military successes came when the German armies were halted outside Moscow. They were also checked outside Leningrad, which would endure a 28-month-long siege, during which one third of its population of 3 million would die. The German attack on Moscow was repulsed by a well-planned counter-attack in December 1941. German troops were ill-equipped for the extreme cold of a Russian winter during which even the oil in tank engines froze. They were driven back by fresh troops from Siberia led by Marshal G. Zhukov. Zhukov’s defeat of the Japanese army at Khalkhyn Gol in eastern Mongolia in August 1939 had persuaded the Japanese to concentrate their efforts on the Pacific rather than in Siberia, and this ensured that the Soviet Union would have to fight on only one front. The Moscow counter-attack showed that the German blitzkrieg had failed to break the Soviet Union. Given a long war, and the chance to mobilize more resources, the balance of power was bound to shift in favor of the Soviet Union, with its huge reserves of people, energy, and resources. In 1942, Soviet military production began to rise fast.

Hitler, who was aware of his own armies’ shortage of fuel, decided not to renew the attack on Moscow in 1942, despite the advice of his generals. Instead, he sent his armies towards the oil-rich lands of the Caucasus and the Caspian. He had long been obsessed with oil, which he saw as “the vital commodity of the industrial age and for economic power. He read about it, he talked about it, he knew the history of the world’s oil fields.”<sup>103</sup> In August 1941, he told his generals that the primary goal was not to take Moscow but “to seize the

Crimea and the industrial and coal region on the Donets, and to cut off the Russian oil supply from the Caucasus areas.”<sup>104</sup>

By August 1942, German forces had reached the oil fields of Maikop, only to find that Soviet forces had destroyed them. But shortage of oil (on occasions the Germans had to transport oil on camels) and the difficulties of fighting in the Caucasus mountains slowed the German advance towards the Soviet oil fields. By September 1942, German units had reached the Volga river at Stalingrad, a mere 30 miles from the site of Khan Janibek’s capital of New Saray. Taking the city would have allowed the German army to cut and control the vital transportation routes for Caucasus oil. After months of vicious fighting in the streets of Stalingrad, a Soviet counter-offensive in November surrounded and captured most of General von Paulus’s 6th Army. Oil played a critical role in the defeat because German tanks and trucks lacked the fuel needed to attempt a breakout. Meanwhile, General von Manstein had begged Hitler to send troops from the Caucasus, but Hitler refused, on the grounds that, without Baku oil, “the war is lost.”<sup>105</sup> Stalingrad was the most disastrous defeat the Germans had yet suffered. From now on, despite many reverses, Soviet armies would drive their enemies slowly back to Berlin.

The Soviet advantage in men and material increased as Soviet output revived. Between 1941 and 1944, Soviet munitions production was twice that of Germany and, given that Germany was fighting on several fronts, this means that the relative advantage in munitions was even greater on the eastern front.<sup>106</sup> In August 1944, Soviet forces captured the Romanian oil fields of Ploesti, and the German fuel shortage became critical. Meanwhile American supplies began to arrive in the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program. In 1943 and 1944 supplies under Lend-Lease accounted for perhaps 10 percent of Soviet resources, including significant amounts of oil and oil-refining equipment.<sup>107</sup> The Red Army drove to Berlin in American jeeps as well as Soviet tanks, both fueled at times by American oil, while American canned foods fed much of the Red Army.<sup>108</sup> The Red Army crossed the Soviet Union’s 1939 borders late in 1944; Berlin fell on May 2, 1945; and Germany surrendered on May 9.

The Soviet Union had survived the test of war. In February 1946, Stalin announced, “Our victory means, first of all, that our Soviet social system has triumphed, that the Soviet social system has successfully passed the ordeal in the fire of war and has proved its unquestionable vitality.”

Though some Soviet military equipment, such as its tanks, was of very high quality, and Soviet military commanders, technicians, and scientists displayed great technical virtuosity when necessary, the victory depended primarily on the mobilizational power of the Soviet state. A comparison of Russian military performance in World War I and World War II highlights the greater mobilizational power of the Soviet state. The Soviet government mobilized about 16 percent of its population for military service, while the Tsarist government mobilized only 10 percent; the Soviet economy also produced 25 times as much war matériel each year as the Tsarist economy during World War I.<sup>109</sup>

People were mobilized as successfully as resources. The government mobilized the patriotism of Soviet citizens, with appeals to the military glory

of Russian commanders from Alexander Nevskii to Suvorov and Kutuzov. It rallied Orthodox believers by striking a new concordat with the Orthodox Church in 1943, which gained it the church's blessing for the war effort. Jewish and Islamic leaders concluded similar agreements. It also allowed a temporary resurgence of the republican nationalisms that had first emerged in the 1920s. But the government also generated a broader, Soviet patriotism. A new Soviet anthem replaced the Marxist "Internationale" in 1943, and a new recruitment drive brought soldiers of many different nationalities into the Party. The Germans helped, of course, by the brutality with which they treated the occupied regions, and their failure to secure the loyalty of the many who had greeted them as liberators.

### *AFTER THE WAR: 1945–1953*

The costs of victory were huge. About 8.7 million died in battle, compared with 1.8 million in 1914–1917; and perhaps 25–26 million died altogether during the war.<sup>110</sup> Some 1,700 towns and townships, 70,000 villages, 32,000 factories, and 52,000 miles of railways had been destroyed, and 100,000 collective and state farms had been put out of action.<sup>111</sup> By 1942, Soviet GNP was a third less than in 1940.<sup>112</sup>

Yet the Soviet system emerged stronger than ever before. The prestige of victory generated patriotism. No longer militarily vulnerable, the Soviet Union had emerged as a great world power. It made good the territorial losses of 1918, regaining control of the Baltic provinces, Bessarabia and Moldavia, western Ukraine and eastern Poland. Between 1945 and 1949, it created a new external empire in the eastern European countries occupied by the Red Army in 1945. With the victory of Mao Zedong's armies in 1949, communism became the ideology of Inner Eurasia's two super-powers, which were, respectively, the largest and the most populous countries in the world.

In the late 1940s, the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear weapons. Nuclear physics had flourished in the 1930s, but withered during the war.<sup>113</sup> Just two months after the USA dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945, Stalin launched a Soviet version of the Manhattan project under a team of scientists led by I. V. Kurchatov, and including the physicist and future dissident Andrei Sakharov. The first Soviet atomic bomb was tested three years later, in August 1949, in Kazakhstan. It was based partly on knowledge of American plans for a plutonium weapon, smuggled to the Soviet Union by a spy, Klaus Fuchs. Two years later, the Soviet Union tested its first thermonuclear bomb. Soviet rocketry, like that of the USA, was developed with the help of captured German scientists.

By 1950, far from being a backward and isolated island of communism in a vast capitalist ocean, the Soviet Union was a superpower, and the leader of one of two global power blocs. Like the Mongol Empire at its height, its power had overflowed the lands of Inner Eurasia, and was shaping the history of much of Outer Eurasia. To many in the Party and outside it, these achievements fully justified the sacrifices of the industrialization drive.



Some began to hope that the government would reward its population for the sacrifices of industrialization and war. Boris Pasternak wrote that the war seemed like “an omen of deliverance, a purifying storm. ... [A] presage of freedom was in the air.”<sup>114</sup> Stalin may have considered participation in the Marshall Plan and an opening of the Soviet economy to the world market, but not for long.

The government began tightening its grip on society even before the war ended. Soldiers who had been captured or had spent any time under enemy occupation were sent straight to the camps, along with others, such as the future novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who made minor criticisms of the Stalinist system. Solzhenitsyn’s first published novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, was about a soldier who returns from the war to the camps. Whole nations suspected of collaboration with the Nazis were deported. The Volga Germans were deported at the beginning of the war, and several Muslim nations, including the Crimean Tatars, the Chechens, and the Kalmyk, were deported en masse to Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Siberia, in 1943–1944, on suspicion of having collaborated with German forces that had briefly controlled their territories. There were also purges within the Party in 1947, including the dismissal of more than a quarter of all district Party officials. By 1950, the camp population had risen to its highest level, at 2.5 million, significantly higher than in the late 1930s, when the peak (in 1938) was about 1.8 million.<sup>115</sup> A similar number were held in “special settlements,” so that, in total, almost 3 percent of the population were in camps or in internal exile in Stalin’s final years.<sup>116</sup> Anne Applebaum estimates that, including all those who passed through the camps of the Gulag, as well as about 4 million prisoners of war, and perhaps 6 million “special exiles” (a category that includes *kulaks* and those deported for their nationality, whether Poles, Balts, Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, or other groups), the total number condemned to forced labor in the Stalin period amounted to about 28.7 million people.<sup>117</sup> These are grotesque measures of the scale of coercive mobilization under Stalin’s rule. By Stalin’s death in 1953, there were signs that a new purge was imminent.

Some who met Stalin after the war felt he was getting isolated, paranoid, and sick. In 1948, the Yugoslav Communist Milovan Djilas thought he saw “conspicuous signs of his senility. ... It was incomprehensible how much he had changed in two or three years.”<sup>118</sup> He may have suffered strokes in 1945 and 1947, and his daughter Svetlana reported that he was increasingly fearful of enemies.<sup>119</sup> Alexander Miasnikov, one of the doctors who attended the dying Stalin, wrote,

I believe that Stalin’s cruelty and suspiciousness, his fear of enemies and loss of the ability to assess people and events, his extreme obstinacy – all this was the result, to a certain extent, of atherosclerosis of the arteries in his brain. ... Basically, the state was being governed by a sick man.

Molotov later claimed that, “In my opinion, Stalin was not quite in possession of his faculties during his final years.”<sup>120</sup>

Immediately after the war, the government resorted once more to direct mobilization, the strategy it understood best, this time to rebuild the economy. The Soviet Union imposed savage reparations on its wartime enemies, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Finland, and used the labor of 2 million prisoners of war. However, recovery depended mainly on the efforts and sacrifices of Soviet citizens. Once again, planners diverted resources from consumption to investment. A currency reform in 1947 reduced real wages and devalued the savings of millions. Industrial discipline was tightened, and workers were punished for being late or working poorly. Everyone worked long hours. Living standards remained low, particularly on the collective farms, which were often paid less than the cost of the grain they produced. The sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya studied life on collective farms in this period.

In 1951, when I was looking through the aggregate annual accounts of collective farms in one of the regions of Kirghizia, I noticed that on average the collective farmers received one kopek for a day's labour, and for a year about two pre-reform roubles ... (the price of 1 kg of bread). In reply to my puzzled question as to what they lived on, it was explained to me that most of the families had a small flock of sheep and goats, which were pastured in the mountains, concealed from the tax authorities. So it was that I, a graduate of a university where I had been told about the advantages of the socialist distribution of income according to work done, first came up against the fact that a social class comprising about 40 per cent of the population of the country was paid practically nothing for its work.<sup>121</sup>

Heavy industry recovered fastest, but production also grew rapidly in consumer goods industries. By 1950, heavy industrial production had passed the 1940 level, while production in agriculture and consumer goods industries had returned to pre-war levels. By 1950, living standards in the towns had probably returned to the level of 1928. The Soviet consumer had yet to reap the material benefits of industrialization, but much would change with Stalin's death in March 1953.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of economists, such as Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, had argued on theoretical grounds that it would prove impossible to manage a large economy without competitive markets that could provide vital price information about relative scarcities.<sup>122</sup> The achievements of the Stalinist command economy did not disprove these arguments, but they did show that it was possible for an economy without markets to grow fast and industrialize fast despite the inevitable wastage and inefficiencies of central planning. Given access to technologies that could tap the energy of fossil fuels, it was possible for methods of direct mobilization to generate rapid growth. And that was enough to persuade many people of the virtues of command economies in general and of the Soviet path as a viable strategy of rapid industrialization. What remained unclear was how long it would be possible to persist with strategies that wasted human and natural resources on such a vast

scale, even in as large and resource-rich a country as the Soviet Union. Were the methods of the Soviet command economy capable of generating sustained as well as rapid growth?

## NOTES

- 1 Ericson, "Command *versus* 'Shadow'," 52, cited from Ericson, "Command Economy and its Legacy," 52.
- 2 Cited in Volkogonov, *Stalin*, 164–165.
- 3 Wheatcroft and Davies, "Population," 68.
- 4 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 17–18.
- 5 Danilov, *Rural Russia*, 47.
- 6 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 113–115.
- 7 Wheatcroft, "More Light on the Scale of Repression," 271; and see Wheatcroft and Davies, "Population," 71–77; on the stockpiling of grain for war as a motivation, see Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 206. In post-Soviet Ukraine, these discussions focused on the notion of the *Holodomor*, or the idea of a systematic attempt to destroy Ukrainian nationalism through famine; on the politics of the *Holodomor*, see Smith, *Red Nations*, 107–111.
- 8 Sholokhov, *Pis'ma*, 150–151.
- 9 Sholokhov, *Pis'ma*, 167.
- 10 Sholokhov, *Pis'ma*, 187.
- 11 Medvedev and Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 28.
- 12 Lewin, "Society, State and Ideology," 64.
- 13 Harrison, "National Income," 50.
- 14 Nove, *Economic History*, 213.
- 15 Harrison, "National Income," 316, for some figures.
- 16 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 42.
- 17 Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union*, 9.
- 18 Wheatcroft and Davies, "Agriculture," 129.
- 19 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 74.
- 20 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 96, 133–134.
- 21 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 85.
- 22 Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, 334–335.
- 23 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 423–426.
- 24 Swanievicz, *Forced Labour*, 4 and Ch. 14.
- 25 Cohn, "The Soviet Economy," 333.
- 26 Barber and Davies, "Employment and Industrial Labour," 88.
- 27 Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft, *Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union*, 284 (Table 16); Atkinson, *Women in Russia*, 194.
- 28 Cited from Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 83.
- 29 Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, 62.
- 30 Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 160.
- 31 Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 196.
- 32 Table 5 in Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 272.
- 33 Nove, *Economic History*, 254.
- 34 Cited from Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 57.
- 35 Cited from Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 57.
- 36 Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 63–64, 69ff.

- 37 On the scale of social mobility in Stalinist Russia, see Edele, *Stalinist Society*, Ch. 3, “Patterns of Chaos.”
- 38 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 5.
- 39 Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*.
- 40 Cited from Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 8.
- 41 Shearer, “Stalinism,” 206–207.
- 42 Lohr and Poe, *Military and Society in Russia*, 12.
- 43 Lewis, “Technology,” 188; Kotkin, *Magic Mountain*, 43.
- 44 Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 193–194.
- 45 Yergin, *The Prize*, 320.
- 46 Gaddy and Ickes, “Russia’s Dependence on Resources,” 309; Campbell, *Soviet Energy Technologies*, 7.
- 47 Shearer, “Stalinism,” 194.
- 48 Elliot, *The Soviet Energy Balance*, 124–125.
- 49 Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 50.
- 50 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 126.
- 51 Deutscher, *Stalin*, 349.
- 52 Cited in Lewin, *Political Undercurrents*, 28.
- 53 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 67, 515.
- 54 The number, 476, from Applebaum, *Gulag*, 4.
- 55 Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 110.
- 56 On Stalin’s closest followers, see Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team*.
- 57 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 177–180.
- 58 The most recent account is in Ch. 4 of Khlevniuk’s biography, *Stalin*.
- 59 Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, xx; and see Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, Ch. 4, partic. 158ff.
- 60 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 155.
- 61 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 156.
- 62 Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 114.
- 63 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 1: 11.
- 64 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 150, 158.
- 65 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 520.
- 66 For estimates see Applebaum, *Gulag*, Appendix, “How Many,” 515–522.
- 67 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 517.
- 68 Bacon, “Glasnost’ and the Gulag,” 1080.
- 69 Kopelev, *No Jail for Thought*, 121–122.
- 70 Lewin, “Society, State and Ideology,” 74.
- 71 See Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite.”
- 72 Kuromiya, “Lazar’ Moiseevich Kaganovich,” 278–279.
- 73 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 137.
- 74 Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 167, 176.
- 75 Berliner, “Contribution of the Soviet Archives,” 7; there is a good survey of the statistics on Soviet history in Wheatcroft and Davies, “Crooked Mirror.”
- 76 For the sake of uniformity, I have mainly used figures from Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, wherever possible.
- 77 Table 4 in Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 272.
- 78 Table 10 in Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 277.
- 79 Harrison, “National Income,” 41.
- 80 Harrison, “National Income,” 44, gives estimates for the territory within the 1939 boundaries.
- 81 From Table 28 in Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 298.

- 82 Davies, “Industry,” 145.  
 83 Davies, “Industry,” 152.  
 84 Harrison, “National Income,” 45.  
 85 Based on Table 2, Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 270; GDP is GNP minus interest earned abroad, which, for the USSR, was insignificant, so the two terms are more or less interchangeable, *Economic Transformation*, 40.  
 86 Lewis, “Technology,” 193.  
 87 Lewis, “Technology,” 194.  
 88 Table 41, Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 310.  
 89 Both citations from Gregory, *Before Command*, 134.  
 90 Lewis, “Technology,” 192.  
 91 Davies, “Changing Economic Systems,” 21.  
 92 Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 5.  
 93 Clark, *Barbarossa*, 70.  
 94 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 174, 188.  
 95 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 199.  
 96 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 200–202.  
 97 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 334, and Nove, *Economic History*, 276.  
 98 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 126.  
 99 Table 29b, Davies et al., *Economic Transformation*, 300.  
 100 Harrison, “The Second World War,” 249; and see Harrison, *Economics of World War II*, 22–25, which compares the mobilizational efforts of different countries.  
 101 Edele, *Stalinist Society*, 58.  
 102 Harrison, *Accounting for War*, 141.  
 103 Yergin, *The Prize*, 317.  
 104 Yergin, *The Prize*, 318–319.  
 105 Yergin, *The Prize*, 320.  
 106 Harrison, “The Second World War,” 242.  
 107 Harrison, *Accounting for War*, 134.  
 108 Harrison, “The Second World War,” 251.  
 109 Harrison, “The Second World War,” 265.  
 110 Harrison, “The Second World War,” 265.  
 111 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 179.  
 112 Harrison, *Accounting for War*, 170.  
 113 Holloway, “Science, Technology and Modernity,” 562–563.  
 114 Cited in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 179–180.  
 115 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 516.  
 116 Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 268.  
 117 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 516–518.  
 118 Cited in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 198.  
 119 Cited in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 211.  
 120 Both citations from Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 197.  
 121 Zaslavskaya, *The Second Socialist Revolution*, 23.  
 122 There is a good summary of these discussions in Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 18–25.

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## [15] *1900–1950: CENTRAL AND EASTERN INNER EURASIA*

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### *BEYOND THE HEARTLAND*

Understanding the history of the Soviet heartland is vital if we are to make sense of the histories of other parts of Inner Eurasia in the twentieth century, because the storms that blew so fiercely through the Inner Eurasian heartlands in the first half of the twentieth century also battered Central and Eastern Inner Eurasia. And that is because the Soviet Union ended up controlling all of Inner Eurasia, directly or indirectly. Siberia, the Kazakh steppes, and Transoxiana were all parts of the Russian Empire and then of the new Soviet Empire. But after the collapse of the Qing in 1911, Mongolia also drifted into the Soviet orbit, and Xinjiang, though legally independent and ruled by local warlords, came under increasing Soviet economic, military, and political influence until 1949, when those ties were abruptly severed after the arrival of the Chinese People's Army.

Most of these regions underwent bewildering and traumatic political, economic, and cultural changes, as the revolutionary storms in the heartlands of Inner Eurasia shook all parts of Inner Eurasia. But beyond the heartland, industrialization proper had limited impact before the second half of the twentieth century.

### *CENTRAL INNER EURASIA: KAZAKHSTAN AND TRANSOXIANA*

1900–1917

Before World War I, Russia's grip on Kazakhstan and Central Asia seemed secure. There was some revolutionary activity in 1905, but mainly amongst Russian intellectuals and workers in the larger cities such as Tashkent.

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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In the years after the 1905 revolutions, Muslim intellectuals made several attempts to forge new ethnic, religious, and even national identities in Turkic-speaking parts of the empire. In August 1905, a “Union of the Muslims in Russia” was founded near Nizhnii Novgorod. Like many similar organizations, it would split into a liberal wing and a more radical and pro-socialist wing. Between 1905 and 1907 newspapers and journals in Turkic languages proliferated. More than 30 appeared in the Tatar language (published in Kazan, Orenburg, Astrakhan, Uralsk, Orenburg, Ufa, and St. Petersburg), 13 in Azeri, and two in Persian (both published in Baku), as well as three in Crimean Tatar, including Ismail Bey Gasprinskii’s well-known Jadidist periodical, *The Interpreter*. A Jadidist periodical also appeared in Transoxiana.<sup>1</sup> Volga Tatars played a disproportionate role in attempts to forge modern Muslim and Turkic identities, because they had been part of the empire since the sixteenth century and had long acted as economic, cultural, and political intermediaries between Russia and the empire’s growing number of Muslims and Turkic speakers. Since the foundation of the University of Kazan’ in 1804, Kazan’ had become a major center for the study of Muslim culture.

In Transoxiana, partly through Gasprinskii’s influence, several Muslim intellectuals took up the idea of a pan-Turkic identity for Muslims in the Russian Empire. Gasprinskii himself was a modernizer, sympathetic to the Kadets and familiar with Russian culture. His liberal nationalism was influenced by the Russian Slavophiles and Pan-Slavists, but also by the Turkish “Young Ottoman” movement. He tried to combine religious and linguistic identities into a supra-national identity for all Turkic speakers in the empire.<sup>2</sup> But such projects would be wrecked by government censorship and the linguistic, religious, and cultural divisions between different Turkic-speaking communities.

Gasprinskii made more headway with his proposals for the creation of “new method” (*usul-i-jadid*) or “Jadidist” Muslim schools that would use modern syllabic scripts to teach subjects such as history and science alongside the Qur’an. Several Jadidist newspapers appeared after 1905, as revolution encouraged hopes for Central Asian independence, but most would eventually be closed by Russian censors. In Tashkent, one of Gasprinskii’s supporters founded Central Asia’s first Jadidist school, with the goal of building a large network of schools offering a modern Islamic education. The first successful Jadidist school in semi-independent Bukhara was opened by Tatars in 1907, in the home of a local merchant.<sup>3</sup> But Jadidist ideas alienated traditional Muslims who were committed to traditional forms of education in madrasas. For many conservatives, the very idea of “progress” was antithetical.<sup>4</sup> Russian officials also feared that Jadidist schools would incubate dangerous new forms of Turkic nationalism. The political passivity of traditional Muslim schools during the 1905 revolution and the activism of many Jadidists confirmed these suspicions. By 1917, there were about 184 Jadidist schools in Central Asia and Semirechie.<sup>5</sup>

World War I had little immediate impact in Kazakhstan and Transoxiana, as the Russian government did not recruit from Muslim regions. In 1915, however, the government introduced a special tax to compensate for the

region's freedom from military recruitment, and began to requisition animals at artificially low prices. Then, in June 1916, it ordered the recruitment of almost 400,000 Central Asians for non-combat duties. This measure ignited the revolt that many had expected since Russia first conquered Transoxiana in the 1860s.

Demonstrations began in Khodzhent and Samarkand and soon spread throughout Transoxiana. In the Ferghana valley, they took the form of a holy war against the Russian infidel. In Semirechie, thousands may have died in clashes between local Kyrgyz and recently arrived Russian migrants. By the end of August, Russian troops had re-established control, and many Kyrgyz had fled across the mountains to China.

Almost 3,000 Russians died in these clashes, mostly in Semirechie, and about 10,000 farms were destroyed.<sup>6</sup> Turkic losses were far higher, most dying during the long Kyrgyz retreat into China.<sup>7</sup> The Central Asian uprising was over by the end of 1916, but it had shown both the limits of Russian control and the difficulties of forming a broad Turkic opposition movement.

## 1917–1924: REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

News of the Tsar's abdication in March 1917 provoked uprisings in major towns in Central Asia, mainly among the local Russian populations. Immediately after the revolution in Petrograd, a form of dual power appeared in Tashkent. A Committee was set up to support the Provisional Government, while workers in the Tashkent railroad repair shops formed a Soviet, and soldiers formed a Soviet of Soldiers. In Bukhara, local Jadidists appealed to the Provisional Government for help in modernizing Bukharan society, but in April the emir expelled the reformers after violent anti-reform demonstrations.

At first, the Provisional Government seemed sympathetic to demands for regional autonomy. It stopped mobilizing Central Asians for the war effort, and amnestied those involved in the 1916 uprising. In April, it created a Turkestan Committee that included some Central Asian and Kazakh leaders.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, in March, the Tashkent Soviet arrested the last Governor-General of Turkestan, Kuropatkin. In May, an All-Russian Muslim Congress, sponsored mainly by Tatars and consisting mostly of Russian-educated Muslim intellectuals, met in Moscow and demanded regional autonomy for Central Asian nations. Jadidist groups formed a "Muslim Central Council of Turkestan," while conservative Muslim groups organized a "Union of the Clergy."

In the Kazakh steppes, a small Westernizing intelligentsia had emerged, inspired by the writings of Ch. Valikhanov in the late nineteenth century. In July 1917, Kazakh intellectuals formed the Alash Orda movement in Orenburg. In December, the Alash Orda party announced the formation of an autonomous Kazakh region. However, in the Kazakh steppes, there was by now a significant population of Russian and Cossack migrants, and Kazakhs were already in a minority in some regions. During the Civil War, anti-Bolshevik Cossacks from Orenburg and Semirechie would seize control of much of Kazakhstan.

In Transoxiana, there were fewer Russian settlers, probably no more than 400,000.<sup>9</sup> Yet deep divisions between progressive Jadidists and religious

conservatives prevented the creation of a unified Muslim movement for regional autonomy. In May 1917, nationalist Muslims demanded national autonomy, the adoption of sharia law, and the replacement of cotton crops with grains.<sup>10</sup> A central Muslim council was elected, dominated by Jadidists, but it had little impact on a still largely illiterate population.

After the October Revolution and during the Civil War, the region's many ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences generated cross-cutting conflicts of extraordinary complexity.

In Kazakhstan, soon after the October Revolution pro-Bolshevik forces occupied major cities including Orenburg, Semipalatinsk, and Verny (Alma-Aty). But they were soon expelled by local Cossacks. The seizure of power in Orenburg under a Cossack leader, Dutov, cut Russian links to Central Asia through the Orenburg railway until late 1919, and the trans-Caspian railway links through Ashkhabad were severed in mid-1918 by the creation of a Turkmen Socialist Revolutionary Republic supported by Britain, which survived until early 1920.<sup>11</sup> The severing of economic links with Russia demonstrated the increasing economic vulnerability of Central Asia, as a result of increasing cotton production and declining production of basic foodstuffs, and threatened major towns such as Tashkent with famine.

In January 1918, leaders of the Kazakh Alash Orda movement formed an anti-Bolshevik government under the leadership of Ali Khan Bukeikhanov, and in alliance with Cossacks from Orenburg. Now based at Semipalatinsk (Semei), Alash Orda claimed to rule much of Kazakhstan, but in reality, small local forces battled for control region by region. By the middle of 1918, the Alash Orda government faced both Red and White armies, but its brief period of rule is remembered today as the first period of Kazakh independence in the modern era.<sup>12</sup> At the end of 1919, Bolshevik forces under Mikhail Frunze (who grew up in Central Asia) defeated forces under the Orenburg Cossack leader Dutov, and Dutov's forces began a long retreat through northern Kazakhstan to Semirechie and Xinjiang.<sup>13</sup> Red army units took control of most of Kazakhstan, and early in 1920, the Alash Orda recognized the Bolshevik government. In August 1920 a Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created.

In Transoxiana, the Tashkent Soviet seized power in November 1917. It was dominated by Russians and anti-Bolshevik socialists, and offered merely token representation to the Muslim population. Early in December members of the Turkestan Muslim Central Council, meeting in Kokand, proclaimed the creation of an autonomous Turkestan. But in February 1918, troops from the Tashkent Soviet captured Kokand and massacred several thousand of its inhabitants. Islamic opposition movements went underground, forming the beginnings of the Basmachi ("bandits") movement, which, in various forms, would resist Bolshevik power until 1923, and would flare up again in the 1920s and the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> The Basmachi soon formed an Islamic army with many local cells, similar to those that had resisted Russian conquest in the Caucasus. But it lacked unity, being made up of a diverse coalition of anti-Bolshevik forces, Turkic nationalists, and local warlords. Soviet attacks on Russian settlers in Fergana prompted the formation of a local Russian peasant army which briefly

allied with the Basmachi to create another short-lived Ferghana government in 1919.<sup>15</sup>

In Bukhara and Khiva there were few Russian settlers, apart from the Russian garrison in Khiva. When this left in January 1918, local Turkmen, led by Junayd Khan, deposed the Khivan Khan, Isfendiar. In Bukhara, an organization of radicalized Jadidists known as “Young Bukhara” sought the help of Soviet forces from Tashkent to overthrow the emir. In February 1918, troops from Tashkent took Bukhara and looted it as they had looted Kokand. But in Bukhara their actions provoked a successful uprising; they were expelled from the city, and many Russians and Jadidists were killed. The emir of Bukhara attacked the young Bukharan movement, destroyed railway lines to block a Russian invasion, and tried to secure arms and other military supplies from Persia and Afghanistan. Bukhara became effectively independent until it was reconquered by Soviet forces in September 1920 and the emir, Alim Khan, was forced to flee.<sup>16</sup> In what is now Turkmenistan, a group of educated Turkmen held a Turkmen Congress in Ashkhabad in late 1917. In February 1918, they started to form a Turkmen army and created a Provisional Government of Transcaspia that would briefly seek British military assistance.

In late 1919, these many conflicts would be resolved by the arrival of Red Army troops under Mikhail Frunze. In principle, the Bolsheviks were committed to some degree of Central Asian autonomy. As early as 1918, the Party announced the formation of a Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in Central Asia, in a move that gained them support from some local nationalists and modernizers, such as the Tatar Sultan Galiev, who worked with the Bolshevik Commissariat of Nationalities. Galiev was a Tatar nationalist but had given important support to the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, both in defending Kazan’ against White forces and in bringing Bashkir nationalists over to the Bolsheviks. Though close to Stalin, the Soviet Commissar for Nationalities, Galiev would be arrested in 1923, when it became clear that he hoped to create a genuinely independent Muslim Communist Party ruling an independent Muslim Turkestan. In October 1919, Lenin created a Turkestan Commission or *Turkkommissia* to manage Central Asia. Aware of Russia’s traditional insensitivity towards the local population, the *Turkkommissia* was ordered to include more Muslim representatives. This was a foretaste of the policy of “nativization” or *korenizatsiya*, which would shape many aspects of Soviet policy in the 1920s.

Frunze’s army established order in most of Central Asia. By February 1920, the Basmachi movement seemed to have been crushed, and some Basmachi units were incorporated into the Red Army. British troops were forced out of Turkmenistan in July 1919, and by February 1920 it was in the hands of the Red Army. In January 1920, Soviet forces took Khiva and established a Khorezmian People’s Soviet Republic dominated, formally, by members of the Young Khivan group. A year later, the nationalist “Young Khivans” were replaced by a more compliant Jadidist government. In Bukhara, after the expulsion of the emir in September 1920, a People’s Republic of Bukhara was formed, under a Young Bukharan movement dominated by Jadidists. Its leader,

Faizullah Khojaev, would eventually become the leader of an independent Uzbekistan.

Opposition to Soviet rule flared up in a revived Basmachi movement. A new leader, Kurbashi Shir Muhammad, appeared in 1920 and by September 1920 his forces controlled most rural areas of Ferghana, before he was defeated by Soviet troops in September 1921. In early 1922, the Basmachi insurgency revived once more after the arrival of the former Turkish Minister of War, Enver Pasha, a former “Young Turk” and Ottoman army officer, who hoped to build a Turkic nation reaching from Anatolia into Southern Russia and Central Asia. Sent by the Bolsheviks to help crush the Basmachi revolt, he switched sides, and rallied Basmachi forces in Tajikistan and Ferghana. But after several victories against the Red Army, he was defeated and killed in August 1922. The Bashkir nationalist intellectual Zeki Validov Togan, a former student of the historian Bartol’d, who had been a member of the Jadidist Young Bukharan government, also joined the Basmachi. But they had no major successes after Enver Pasha’s death, though smaller units survived in Khorezmia, Ferghana, and within the Bukhara Republic. The failures of the Basmachi movement reflected its generally conservative outlook, and its many political and ethnic divisions. Like the White armies during the Civil War, the Basmachi movement was united primarily by opposition to the Bolsheviks.

## 1924–1930: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

By 1924, the Soviet government had re-established the heartland’s control over Kazakhstan and Transoxiana. It reorganized the entire region in what is often known as the “national delimitation” (*natsionalno-gosudarstvennoe razmezhevanie*). This was based on the nationalist assumption that territorial states should coincide roughly with ethnicity, using Stalin’s definition of a nation as “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up, manifested in a common culture.”<sup>17</sup> Though the government mobilized scholars to determine the region’s ethnic make-up, the result was bound to be arbitrary. In 1926 there were almost 200 possible ethnic names in use in Central Asia, and that number had to be whittled down to less than 10.<sup>18</sup>

By designating particular ethnic groups as the dominant peoples in new territorial states and “Autonomous Regions,” the Soviet government unwittingly planted the seeds of modern nationalisms. The Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics or SSRs were formed in 1924. The Uzbek SSR was formed from the remnants of the republics of Bukhara and Khiva and the former Turkestan republic. In 1929, the Tajik SSR was created out of regions that had previously been part of the Uzbek SSR. In 1936, the Kazakh SSR was created from what had been known since 1925 as the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The densely populated, ethnically diverse, and

culturally conservative Ferghana region was split up between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, creating one of the most artificial and contentious borders in the region.

Though the national delimitation was based, in theory, on careful ethnographic and linguistic studies by Soviet scholars, as well as negotiations with local populations, the new borders were inevitably artificial in a region with multiple, overlapping ethnic identities, powerful clan and tribal structures, and no experience of modern territorial states. As the great Russian scholar Bartold once wrote,

When you ask a Turkistani what is his identity, he will answer that he is, first of all, a “Muslim,” then an inhabitant of such or such city or village ..., or if he is a nomad, member of such or such tribe.<sup>19</sup>

However, over the next 60 years, new forms of loyalty and new political networks would congeal around the new national republics, giving them many of the political, economic, and cultural attributes of modern nation-states. The process began soon after the establishment of new borders, as members of the new titular nationalities embraced the new nations enthusiastically, and began, on occasions, to discriminate against minorities stranded on the wrong side of the new borders. In Central Asia, as in many former colonies in other parts of the world, modern nation-states were products rather than survivors of imperialism.<sup>20</sup>

The real goals of Soviet nationalities policy in the region remain unclear, and they were probably unclear even to Soviet leaders. Were the new states intended to prevent the emergence of a broader Turkestani nationalism? Were they designed to enhance Soviet control by deliberately generating ethnic rivalries that would cast Moscow in the role of mediator rather than imperial overlord? Was it perhaps no accident that the new borders left many ethnic groups on the wrong side, such as the largely Tajik population of Uzbekistan’s first capital, Samarkand?

In the 1920s, under the policy of *korenizatsiya* (“enrooting” or “nativization”), the Soviet government and Communist Party recruited increasing numbers of the Muslim population until, by 1930, members of the local nationality made up a majority of those in the upper administration.<sup>21</sup> Like Soviet nationalities policy in general, the policy of *korenizatsiya* was based on the assumption that nationalism could be used to generate support for socialism among non-Russian populations. Most non-Russian Party members in Central Asia came from the region’s tiny educated class, and many were Jadidists, deeply committed to the idea of a modernized Islam and willing to work towards that goal with a modernizing Soviet government. At first, *korenizatsiya* seemed tolerant of Muslim practices. *Waqf* endowment lands were returned to mosques and Muslim schools were reopened.

After 1924, however, modernization began to trump *korenizatsiya*. Polygamy was banned, and many traditional courts and schools were closed. The government began to support the “emancipation” of Muslim women, in the conviction, as one Soviet writer put it in 1927, that no group on earth was “more

ignorant, more downtrodden and enslaved” than the women of Transoxiana.<sup>22</sup> However, mass unveilings in 1926 and 1927 shocked the sensibilities of Muslims from all classes and undermined some of the positive responses to *korenizatsiya*. After 1927, the Soviet government began to persecute Islam along with other organized religious traditions, including Christianity. It confiscated the property of madrasas and mosques, closed religious institutions, limited pilgrimages, and persecuted the Muslim ulama. Between 1921 and 1941, the total number of mosques in the Soviet Union fell from 26,000 to just 1,000.<sup>23</sup>

In the long run, these anti-Muslim campaigns may have helped generate a stronger sense of cultural identity in Central Asia by heightening the sense of cultural differences. Soviet cultural policies that conflicted with Muslim tradition also undermined the project of *korenizatsiya*, as many leading communists from local nationalities opposed them. Such conflicts showed that, however carefully managed from the center, local nationalism could undermine, as well as support, the project of building socialism beyond the Soviet Union’s Russian heartland.

Soviet economic policy was dominated even in the 1920s by the economic needs of the heartland. And in Central Asia this meant reviving cotton production to supply the textile factories of the heartland. During the Civil War, irrigation systems had broken down and commercial ties had snapped, so peasants began once again to plant food crops in place of cotton. Returning to cotton meant displacing food crops, but already, by 1927, the area under cotton was larger than in 1914, and the area under grains was smaller.<sup>24</sup>

## 1930–1950

After 1929, Soviet policy in Kazakhstan and Transoxiana was dominated by the politics of the center and the mobilizational demands of the Soviet industrialization drive. Policy was controlled through the Party, and Russian became the main language of government and administration throughout Central Asia. Arabic script was replaced, officially, by a Latin script, and then, in 1940, by a Cyrillic script, which isolated Central Asian intellectuals from Muslim societies outside the Soviet Union. While the government was committed to the new titular nationalities created in the 1920s, it largely abandoned the policy of *korenizatsiya*. Purges of many of the national communists who had been so prominent in the 1920s began in 1928. In the 1930s, historiography began to stress the leading role of Russian people, and the distinctive national historiographies that had begun to emerge in the 1920s were abandoned. Such policies gave the Soviet central government a firmer political grip on Central Asia. But they did not bring cultural homogeneity; nor did they bring industrialization, as Soviet planners treated most regions away from the heartland primarily as sources of raw materials, land, and labor.

Soviet planners saw the Kazakh steppes, like the Pontic steppes, as a potential source of both agricultural produce and minerals. Collectivization was almost as devastating for Kazakh farmers as for nomads. Both peasants and herders

slaughtered their livestock to avoid their expropriation or simply because they couldn't feed them once fodder grains had been confiscated. Many pastoralists fled to Xinjiang, and huge numbers died in collectivization famines as murderous as those in Ukraine and Russia. The Kazakh livestock population declined by up to 80 percent (livestock numbers would take 30 years to recover), and the human population by almost 40 percent, from 3.6 million in 1926 to 2.2 million in 1939.<sup>25</sup> Many Kazakhs fled to Xinjiang, where OGPU (secret police) troops sent to support the Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shicai caught up with them in 1934, forcing many to trek further east, to the Kansu–Qinhai border with China.<sup>26</sup> They were replaced by new arrivals, many settled forcibly as a result of dekulakization and the relocation of peoples in the 1930s. The Akmolinsk (Astana) region, for example, was settled by large numbers of exiled Volga Germans and Chechens, many of them in special agricultural labor camps. By the late 1940s, a third of Kazakhstan's inhabitants were exiles ("special settlers") or former kulaks.<sup>27</sup> Few Kazakhs now lived a traditional nomadic life.

In Transoxiana, too, the livestock population fell sharply, from 23 million to 9 million between 1929 and 1933.<sup>28</sup> The pressure to produce increasing amounts of cotton (Soviet planners described cotton as "white gold") warped the region's economy even more than in the Tsarist period. Massive irrigation projects were launched, the largest of which were the "Great Ferghana canal," built in 1939/40, and the Karakum canal, which was started in the 1950s and took two decades to complete. Most used forced labor, and all were designed to support cotton production. Central Asian economies became more dependent on cotton production than any societies since the collapse of the US Confederate States. In the 1930s, even most industrial development in the region was linked to cotton, with the building of textile mills and fertilizer factories. But industrialization in general was limited; in 1940, heavy industry accounted for no more than 13 percent of regional manufacturing output.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1930s, the Basmachi movement revived in the Ferghana valley and Turkmenistan.<sup>30</sup> But never was Soviet control of the region seriously threatened. As Party discipline tightened throughout the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, the government lost interest in *korenizatsiya*. Russians played an increasing role within the Party, and many educated Central Asians who had worked with the Party, particularly those with Jadidist sympathies, were removed as nationalists during the purges of 1937–1938. They included Faizullah Khojaev, who had been the nominal leader of Soviet Uzbekistan since 1924.

Whether Central Asian or Slavic in origin, politicians in Central Asia survived through loyalty to the emerging Soviet-wide leadership group or *nomenklatura*, organized through the Communist Party. However, even in the 1930s, Party members of Central Asian origin continued to rely on traditional clan networks, which often survived within Soviet institutions such as collective farms.<sup>31</sup> Clan networks survived particularly well in rural areas, because villages and collective farms often preserved traditional communal identities. As a Soviet ethnographer reported in the 1930s, "all *kolkhoz* members know their clan origins ... even young children, when stating their name, add the name of their clan."<sup>32</sup>



World War II had a profound impact on Central Asia. Unlike the Tsarist government, the Soviet government recruited many Central Asian soldiers. It also dispatched almost 2 million wartime refugees to the region from other parts of the Soviet Union. As in the heartlands, the government made temporary wartime concessions to the population. More Muslims were recruited into leading positions, though they were often shadowed by Slavic subordinates, and discrimination against Islam was relaxed.

By forcing the Soviet government to move industries away from its western borderlands, the war accelerated industrialization in Kazakhstan and Transoxiana. Several hundred Soviet industrial enterprises were moved to Kazakhstan and Central Asia in 1941 and 1942.<sup>33</sup> As Nazi armies conquered the far west, the government began to invest in Central Asian hydroelectric power, light industry, coal mining, and metals industries. Most investment went to the region's most populous republic, Uzbekistan, where there was a massive increase in coal mining. But most textiles continued to be manufactured outside Central Asia, even if they used Central Asian cotton and sold their produce back to Central Asian consumers.

### *SIBERIA, 1900–1950*

Siberia's history, too, was shaped largely by the center, though here, resistance to central control was weaker, because indigenous populations were small, divided, and weak. Contiguity, resource wealth, and political weakness all ensured a colonial relationship to the heartland.<sup>34</sup> The nineteenth-century Siberian scholar Nikolai Yadrintsev captured the relationship in the title of his best known book, "Siberia as a Colony." If Siberia and Russia had been separated by seas, like Britain and its colonial "neo-Europes" in North America and Australasia, Siberia might have emerged as an independent nation-state. But geography and the umbilical cord of the Trans-Siberian railroad tied Siberia too closely to the Russian heartland. The railway made it easier for the heartland to trade with Siberia, exploit its resources, transport exiles, administer, police, and control its vast territories, and defend it against Chinese or Japanese encroachment.

Migration to Siberia had accelerated before the revolution, with the building of the Trans-Siberian railway and the Stolypin land reforms. Many in the Tsarist government saw migration to Siberia or Central Asia as a partial solution to rising discontent in the overcrowded heartlands. Between 1906 and 1908, 600,000 people a year migrated to Siberia, Siberia's population rose from 6 million in 1893 to more than 10 million in 1913, the town population doubled, and so did the area of farmland. Most recent immigrants settled in western Siberia and stayed within reach of the railway line. Immigration and closer contacts with the heartland encouraged cultural and economic development. Siberia's first university was founded in Tomsk in 1888, and Siberian intellectuals such as Nikolai Yadrintsev began to cultivate a distinctive Siberian identity. Siberia's economy developed rapidly. By 1917, it was exporting 30 percent of its grain crop, as well as large amounts of coal and dairy products; by

1914, Siberian butter, transported in refrigerated trains, was exported all over the world.<sup>35</sup>

Industry and manufacturing developed more slowly. The largest enterprises were the region's many gold mines and the Trans-Siberian railroad. But a small industrial proletariat began to emerge in mining regions and the larger towns, and it would play an important role in the revolutionary era. In 1905, there were strikes in cities along the railway line, often uniting workers and soldiers. Late in the year, troop mutinies along the Trans-Siberian line delayed the return of troops to a heartland collapsing into revolution. In 1912, the shooting of striking workers in the Lena gold fields triggered strikes throughout the empire.

World War I affected Siberia mainly through the recruitment of men and horses. Farms lost laborers, many of whom would be replaced by prisoners of war. By May 1915, there were more than 22,000 prisoners of war just in Tomsk province.<sup>36</sup> After the February revolution, Soviets appeared in most Siberian towns. Most Siberian Soviets were happy to work with the Provisional Government, there was widespread support for the Socialist Revolutionaries, and very little for the Bolsheviks. Siberian nationalists created an All-Siberian Regional Duma in Tomsk in May, and indigenous groups in Yakutia, Bashkiria, Buriatia, and elsewhere created local movements demanding autonomy. But class and ethnic differences and geographical dispersion ensured there would be no unified Siberian response to the revolutionary crisis, either among the indigenous population or among its Slavic and exile populations.

There was little sympathy for the October Revolution in Siberia. However, the Trans-Siberian railway ensured that Siberia would be drawn into the terrifying vortex of the Civil War. As we have seen, the first serious attacks on the Bolsheviks in 1918 were launched by the Czech Legion, whose units had taken over much of the Trans-Siberian railroad in May. Czech successes encouraged anti-Bolsheviks in Tomsk to form a Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia in June 1918. Another anti-Bolshevik government formed in Samara on the Volga from former members of the Constituent Assembly, after Czech units had taken over the city. But, unlike the Tomsk government, the Samara "Committee of the Constituent Assembly" or "Komuch" was determined to hold Siberia within a revived Russian Empire. Emboldened by the successes of the Czech Legion, almost 20 other anti-Bolshevik governments would emerge in different parts of Siberia. Most were based on the railways, and several, such as that of Ataman G. M. Semenov in Transbaikalia, were led by Siberian Cossacks. Some of these warlord regimes were so brutal and created such chaos that they helped reconcile many Siberians to Soviet rule.

In 1918, Japanese forces landed in Vladivostok and invaded eastern Siberia. They were supported by smaller American forces hoping to contain Japanese ambitions in the region. In September, in Ufa, a gathering of oppositional forces announced the formation of a united anti-Bolshevik government, the Directorate, which soon moved to Omsk. On November 18, Admiral Kolchak, the Directorate's Minister of War, seized power. He was soon accepted as the leader of all anti-Bolshevik forces, whether based in South Russia, the Far North, the Baltic, or Siberia. Within a month, Siberian forces had captured Perm from the Bolsheviks, and began an advance on the Russian heartland.

By June 1919, the advance had ground to a halt. A young Red commander, Mikhail Frunze, recaptured Ufa, and the White Siberian armies began to retreat. Uprisings broke out against Kolchak's government in much of Siberia. Bolshevik forces occupied Omsk in November 1919, as Kolchak and many of his troops headed east on the Trans-Siberian railroad. In Irkutsk, Kolchak was turned over to the Cheka by local Czech troops, who shot him in February 1920. It would take longer to defeat regional Cossack forces and persuade the Japanese and other Allied forces to withdraw from the Far East. Not until 1922 did the Bolsheviks take over Vladivostok.

In a region as vast as Siberia, there were really several distinct civil wars. There were even attempts to mobilize troops from the north. Ataman Semenov tried to mobilize all the Tungus, while a White commander, Bochkarev, mobilized dog-sled drivers on the Okhotsk coast.<sup>37</sup> In Yakutia, a region almost as large as European Russia, with a population of just one quarter of a million, there existed some basis for a genuine nationalist movement, seeded by the presence of political exiles. The Yakut outnumbered Russian settlers and many were well educated. News of the February revolution reached the 8,000 inhabitants of Yakutsk by telegraph, and a local "Committee of Public Safety" was formed, dominated by exiled socialists and Yakut nationalists. By October, the Committee was moderate and nationalist in its outlook, and had joined with a nationalist body, the *Sakha aimakh* ("Yakut Kindred"). The Committee rejected the Bolshevik coup and declared Yakutia independent after the Bolsheviks disbanded the Constituent Assembly. In July 1918, the Yakutsk government was overthrown by pro-Bolshevik troops from Irkutsk, who created a Soviet government that was itself overthrown 10 days later, when Irkutsk fell to the Czech Legion. In December 1919, a pro-Bolshevik uprising in Yakutsk set up a Soviet executive committee that sentenced several anti-Bolshevik leaders to death by firing squad.<sup>38</sup>

In many regions, civil war led to social and economic collapse. In Omsk, the capital of the anti-Bolshevik government, inflation undermined the Kolchak ruble, making basic necessities, including clothing and fuel, unaffordable for most people, while a flood of refugees almost doubled the city's population from 300,000 to more than half a million. Many died of exposure and starvation.<sup>39</sup> The chaos of the Civil War years made peace of any kind welcome, particularly to the populations of Siberia's towns.

In the 1920s, the gap between Soviet dreams and realities was particularly wide in Siberia. It was widest of all amongst the region's indigenous populations, many of whom still lived by herding or traditional forms of foraging. The Soviet Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, issued in November 1917, formally abolished the *iasak* or tribute system. However, the Civil War interrupted supplies of goods such as gunpowder and grain on which many native peoples were now dependent. By the end of the war, many indigenous Siberians were deeply impoverished, trapped painfully between a vanishing traditional past and a modern future that had not yet arrived.<sup>40</sup>

In accordance with Soviet ideals of *korenizatsiya*, early Soviet legislation attempted to protect the rights and traditions of indigenous Siberian populations. In 1920, the Soviet government cancelled the debts of indigenous

communities, and banned the sale of alcohol. Reforms in the early 1920s, inspired partly by the ideas of socialists who had lived in northern Siberia, allowed a revival of customary law. However, the ideals of *korenizatsiya* fitted uneasily with the Soviet commitment to modernization, and in 1926 the government banned customs such as clan vengeance and the payment of blood-money or bride-price, which it now described as “relics of the tribal way of life.”<sup>41</sup>

The government tried, with limited success, to create modern social and political structures in Siberia and to introduce modern forms of medicine and education. It attempted to establish Soviets, even in the Far North, where such institutions had little meaning. In the tundra, chiefs still had great authority, so that when a Nenets clan was made to elect a Soviet, its people immediately held a second, unofficial meeting which elected a prince.<sup>42</sup> The government created several Siberian “Autonomous Regions,” but their borders made little sense locally, as they cut across traditional ethnic and linguistic borders and migration routes. In 1923, the government established the first schools for the indigenous population. In 1924, a Committee for the Assistance to the Peoples of the Northern Borderlands (or “Committee of the North”) was formed with the help of local socialist intellectuals such as V. G. Bogoraz, who hoped to preserve traditional ways of life while encouraging selective modernizing reforms. In 1925, 19 students from northern peoples were sent to study at Leningrad University, where a new “Institute of Peoples of the North” was established to study the languages and cultures of northern peoples.<sup>43</sup> But by the 1930s, any hopes of balancing past traditions with the demands of modernization would be swept away by the aggressive modernizing agendas of Stalinism.

The Stalinist industrialization drive transformed the lives of all Siberians, sometimes in grotesque ways. Party leaders simply saw a historically created “contradiction” in the Far North, where they were determined to develop the region’s “productive forces.” As one old Bolshevik (and ethnographer) put it: “Raising the tribes of almost Neolithic reindeer breeders and hunters to the level of world civilization – what a difficult and yet fascinating task it was!”<sup>44</sup> Collectivization and dekulakization forced government officials to seek out “exploiters” and “kulaks” among the indigenous peoples of the north, and their solutions became increasingly surrealistic.

[N]ew types of kulaks were discovered among fishermen, sea hunters, and small taiga herders. Grooms working for their brides, widows living with relatives, and poorer kinsmen provided with temporary reindeer herds became “hired labor,” and many heads of households became exploiters for being heads of households.<sup>45</sup>

Compulsory education was resisted particularly fiercely, partly because children were needed to do work, and partly because the parents knew that education would alienate children from their families.<sup>46</sup> In the late 1930s the Committee of the North was eventually disbanded, and the ethnographic research into the cultures of the north which had underpinned much of its work was largely abandoned.

The government's determination to mobilize Siberia's rich resources at any cost ensured that in Siberia the logic of planning would diverge further from market realism than in any other part of the Soviet Union. Entire cities were built in regions that no capitalist investors would have seriously considered, and labor was expended with no regard for its economic or human cost during massive and costly attempts to develop the Far North.

Russia's forced development of its vast storehouse of energy, minerals, and raw materials in Asia meant that everyone was in the wrong place and doing the wrong things. Siberia's monocities [cities with one major employer] were in remote, hostile environments – an archipelago in the wilderness.<sup>47</sup>

In the 1920s, Siberian peasants had generally prospered. Grain production rose faster, and Siberian peasants bought more agricultural machinery than in most of the Soviet Union.<sup>48</sup> But their prosperity made Siberian peasants easy targets once the government turned against the *kulaks*. It is no accident that in January 1928 Stalin traveled to Siberia to prove his claim that the peasantry were hoarding the resources needed to build socialism. As Stalin understood, increased grain production was forcing down the market price of grain, and discouraging the marketing of grain surpluses that the government needed to feed its towns and fund industrialization.

As the government began to squeeze wealthy peasants, 300,000 Siberian households were expropriated as *kulaks* in 1930–1932. Several hundred thousand peasants were deported to Siberia from European Russia, mostly to remote regions, where many were simply dumped and told to get on with it.<sup>49</sup> In the chaos of collectivization, attempts were made to collectivize fishing communities in Kamchatka and reindeer herders, such as the Ewenki Tungus, who lacked even a tribal level of organization. On the Lower Tunguska river, local groups of herders were assembled in a single “commune” and forced to pool their reindeer, traps, guns, and even domestic and household goods. Many fled. In 1937, 30 percent of the Yakut were still uncollectivized, and less than half of the reindeer herds in the Far North.<sup>50</sup> But the attempts at collectivization had ruined both herders and foragers, cutting the size of reindeer herds and leaving much good pasture and hunting land unused.

In the 1930s, GULAG became the main driver of economic mobilization in Siberia.<sup>51</sup> The first Soviet labor camps were set up in the early 1920s, with the idea that criminals could be rehabilitated by doing socially useful labor. But they would end up as a way of mobilizing labor for tasks no free workers would undertake. In 1929, the government adopted a formal resolution “On the Utilization of the Labor of Criminal Prisoners,” which envisaged using forced labor to exploit remote regions. Most of the camps would be created in Siberia, and the largest of all the camp systems was Dalstroi, the Far North Construction Trust, based on Magadan on the Kolyma river in the Far East. From here, Dalstroi managed up to 130 camps extending over 3 million sq. kilometers, engaged mainly in gold mining, which generated much of the foreign currency used to buy foreign equipment.<sup>52</sup> Labor camps transformed Siberia's human geography by settling more of its population in the Far North and north-east,

away from the old population centers in western Siberia and along the Trans-Siberian railway.

During the 1930s, there was considerable investment in Siberian mining and industry even outside the camp system. In the 1930s new coal fields were discovered near Vorkuta in the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), and near Karaganda in Kazakhstan, while the coal of the Kuzbass (Kuznetsk basin) began to be exploited more intensively. A vast chemical plant was established at Kemerovo in the Kuzbass, and a train-building plant at Nizhnii Tagil where the Demidovs had once manufactured iron. New railways were built even into the Arctic regions, mainly to transport timber and the products of mines, and the industrial metals mined from Norilsk; much of this work was done by slave labor.<sup>53</sup> Norilsk, founded in 1935 mainly to mine nickel, was the world's northernmost large city. Temperatures fell to  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$  in winter, and Arctic darkness persisted for almost half the year. Building houses on the permafrost was difficult and expensive; today apartment buildings are sinking as the permafrost melts beneath them.

Industry arrived in Siberia on a larger scale as a result of war. Japan's momentous decision not to declare war on the USSR despite intense German pressure to do so meant that Siberia did not become a front line, but could act, instead, as a reserve of troops, resources, and equipment. It became a crucial driver of the Soviet war effort after the relocation of factories eastwards in response to the Nazi invasion. Chemical plants from Ukraine were relocated to the Kuzbass, Omsk, and Tiumen'; Kharkov's vast tractor factories were producing tanks in the Altai region by early 1942.<sup>54</sup> New factories were also built, including blast furnaces in Magnitogorsk and new metal works at Cheliabinsk. A special body headed by the President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and staffed with scientists and engineers was created to mobilize the resources of the Urals, western Siberia, and Kazakhstan for the war effort. With the loss of Ukraine, western Siberia also became a crucial supplier of food for the heartland. By the end of the war, regions east of the Urals produced more than half of all Soviet coal.

The Siberia of 1950 was very different from the Siberia of 1900. Its population had grown from 10 million in 1913 to 12.6 million in 1926 then to 22.4 million by 1959.<sup>55</sup> It had many more cities and, instead of just settling along the *trakt* and the Trans-Siberian railroad, many more people lived (not always by choice) in the Far North. Siberia also had many manufacturing and mining centers that were contributing significantly to the Soviet Union's fossil fuels economy.

## *THE FORMER CHINESE ZONE: MONGOLIA AND XINJIANG (WESTERN CENTRAL ASIA)*

In 1900, Mongolia and Xinjiang both fell within the Chinese sphere of influence, but the Qing collapse in 1911 was followed by an increase in Russian and then Soviet influence.

## MONGOLIA: 1900–1930

Though there was a Russian presence in Mongolia by 1900, Russian influence was limited before the 1920s by Tsarist decline, revolution, and civil war. After declaring independence in 1911, Mongolia found itself caught uneasily between two potential imperial powers, both of which were going through major crises.

At first, independence increased the power of traditional elites, both nobles and high lamas.<sup>56</sup> According to rough estimates based on the 1918 census, there were 91 princely families or “noyon,” including 410 individuals (c.0.1 percent of the male population), while the lesser nobility accounted for 5.6 percent of society, serfs for 16.6 percent, and *arats* (strictly, the “albat,” or those liable for *corvée* service) for 26.2 percent. Lamas made up an astonishing 44.5 percent of the male population, though in reality only 15 percent lived in monasteries; the rest lived most of the time as ordinary householders.<sup>57</sup>

Mongolian commoners – the “black” population, as opposed to the “white” population of *tajjis* or nobles and the “yellow” population of monks – gained little from independence. Many remained in debt to Chinese creditors, whose rights were protected by the Mongolian ruling class, which used them as bankers. Meanwhile, taxes rose to pay for Mongolia’s new army. The government was archaic. Cabinet meetings frequently degenerated into drunken brawls, and the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu himself was often drunk by noon.<sup>58</sup> Such behavior clashed with the modernizing goals of a small but increasingly influential class of intellectuals and army officers.

As Russia disintegrated after 1917, Mongolia briefly fell back into the orbit of Republican China, and in 1919, a Chinese warlord army ended Mongolian independence. Some nobles and religious leaders were not unhappy with the return of a colonialism that protected the traditional social and cultural order. By late 1919, Chinese troops controlled Khuriye, and Mongolian officials had to kowtow to the Chinese general, Hsü Shu-tseng. The Khutugtu publicly accepted subordination to the Republic of China on January 1, 1920, and the new Mongolian army was disbanded.

The reimposition of Chinese control and the Civil War in Russia prompted the formation of Mongolia’s first revolutionary movement. Most of its members were commoners who, though loyal to Buddhism, resented traditional elite privileges. Whereas in the past Mongolia had looked to Tibet in religion, and to China in politics and commerce, Mongolia’s small modernizing elite, like Central Asia’s Jadidists, looked increasingly to Soviet Russia for protection and help in building a modern society. For its part, the young Soviet government was keen to see a pro-Soviet government in Mongolia that might provide a buffer against Japanese or Chinese expansion in eastern Siberia. But it was reluctant to alienate the new government in China.

The first revolutionary groups formed in Khuriye in 1919 (see Figure 15.1). They represented diverse ideologies and traditions, including some supporters of Bolshevism. Most were committed to national independence as well as to social and economic reform, though communist historiography has obscured the fact by exaggerating the role of future communists such as Sukhebaatur



**Figure 15.1** Photo of Sharav’s painting of Ulaanbaatar (Urga/Khuriye) early in the twentieth century. Courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh.

and his former deputy, Choibalsan. On June 15, 1920, at a secret meeting in Khuriye, two revolutionary groups merged to form the Mongolian People’s Party, whose later incarnations would rule Mongolia for most of the twentieth century.

At first the Party’s aims and ideology were as confused as the coalition from which it emerged. The first clause of the new Party’s manifesto read:

The aims of the People’s Party of Outer Mongolia are to purge cruel enemies who are hostile to the Faith and the nation, to restore lost authority, loyally to protect and encourage state and church to protect our nationality, loyally to reform the internal administration, to plan fully for the well-being of the poor people, constantly to guard our own internal authority and to let people live free from suffering, neither oppressing nor being oppressed.<sup>59</sup>

The Khutugtu gave his blessing to Party negotiations for Soviet aid with Comintern (“Communist International”) agents in Irkutsk. Though Party members were divided between nationalists and socialists, they drew up plans for a modernizing constitutional monarchy under the Khutugtu. Some members of the delegation traveled on to Moscow, where they met Lenin.

Meanwhile, the Russian Civil War had spilled over into Mongolia. Just half a year after they had arrived in Mongolia, Chinese forces were attacked by



the White Russian adventurer and Buddhist Baron Ungern-Sternberg, a former lieutenant of the Siberian Cossack leader Ataman Semenov. Ungern-Sternberg's army of 900 men entered Mongolia in October 1920. Many Mongols, particularly from the nobility, joined Ungern-Sternberg's army, and the Khutugtu gave his blessing to the invasion, in the hope that it might remove the Chinese. In February 1921, Ungern-Sternberg's troops occupied Khuriye and the Khutugtu was enthroned once more as Mongolia's Holy Emperor. But the Russian adventurer's reign of terror soon alienated most Mongolians.<sup>60</sup>

In November 1920, Sukhebaatur returned from Irkutsk to Kiakhta, and began preparations for a military takeover of Mongolia. His immediate target was the Chinese forces who had arrived in Kiakhta after being defeated by Ungern-Sternberg. In February 1921, Sukhebaatur was appointed commander of the 400 or so Mongol troops recruited from the region around Kiakhta. Between March 1 and 3, the first Congress of the Mongolian People's Party was held in Kiakhta. It formed a Provisional Government whose composition and goals reflected the influence of Soviet advisers.

Sukhebaatur turned out to be a fine partisan commander. With Soviet support, he got maximum use out of his tiny, poorly trained and ill-equipped army. In March 1921, the forces of the Mongolian Provisional Government crossed into Mongolia and seized Mongolian Kiakhta (Altan Bulak) from local Chinese troops. Its main strength at this point was that it had the support of members of the Fifth Red Army under Uborevich, with some 10,000 troops.<sup>61</sup> For a few weeks, Mongolia had two governments, the Provisional Government in Kiakhta, and the Khutugtu in Khuriye. Their aims were now quite different, the Khutugtu hoping merely for a restoration of the situation before the Chinese invasion of 1919, while the new Provisional Government hoped to form a democratic government committed to modernization and social reform. In May 1921, some 10,000 Soviet troops from Uborevich's Fifth army (many of them Kalmyks) entered Mongolia, and on July 6, the Soviet and Mongolian armies entered Khuriye and expelled the forces of Ungern-Sternberg. The Khutugtu had attempted to prevent the entry of communist forces using a "*dui*," a magical structure used to repel demons.<sup>62</sup> But these traditional tactics failed, and on July 9, a new government was formed by the Mongolian People's Party, with an ex lama, D. Bodoov, as Premier and Sukhebaatur as Minister for War. The Khutugtu was retained as head of state, though stripped of his autocratic powers. On July 11, 1921, he was enthroned as ruler of Mongolia for the third time. That day, July 11, is still celebrated as Mongolian National Day.

The new ruling party was divided and weak. When it took power, one member remembered that, "At that time the party was only thirty or forty strong ... and our army consisted of a few hundred exhausted partisans. We had only one party cell in the countryside."<sup>63</sup> So violent were divisions between socialists and moderates that in 1922, Premier Bodoov was executed on charges of attempting to restore a traditional monarchy. Nevertheless, the Mongolian People's Party would consolidate its power and rule Mongolia for most of the twentieth century.

The Khutugtu died in May 1924, and Mongolia became the Mongolian People's Republic, a title that survived until 1992. Though major changes would

not be introduced for several years, Mongolia was now ruled by a new elite, very different from the coalition of nobles and lamas who had ruled since the seventeenth century. In August 1924, the third Congress of the Party recommended a socialist path of development, established a new parliamentary body, the *Khural* (the word is related to *quriltai*, the name of the ancient Mongol elective assemblies), and changed the capital's name from Khuriye to Ulaanbaatar or "Red Hero." Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was still keen not to antagonize China by interfering too directly in Mongolia, and by 1924 all Soviet troops had left.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the government's radical pronouncements, social change was limited before the 1930s. Absent were almost all the accepted preconditions for socialism. There was no significant industrial proletariat and hardly any industry apart from a few small government-owned coal mines, the first of which had been established in 1906. Almost all skilled workers and experts came from Russia or China. In 1922, none of the 12 workers in the Nalaikha coal mines near Khuriye was Mongolian. Mongolia's urban population was tiny. As late as 1934, only 17 out of 242 delegates to the ninth Party Congress were industrial workers.<sup>65</sup> Nor was there a large Mongolian bourgeoisie or intelligentsia. Capitalism was represented by little more than Chinese and Mongolian petty traders and money lenders, a near destitute class of vagrants or impoverished herdspeople, and an intellectual class dominated by Buddhist monks and a few socialist radicals. Most of the literate had been educated in the traditions of Lamaism, which were of little help to a modernizing government. In 1924, to give just one illustration of these paradoxes, officials of the new Ministry of Education requested funds for traditional religious ceremonies to break a drought.<sup>66</sup>

There were some reforms. Sukhebaatur insisted on abolishing the traditional punishment of leaving prisoners in a coffin-like box until they died. Particularly important for ordinary Mongolians was the ending of serfdom in 1922, the cancellation of debts to foreign firms, a reduction in the grazing privileges of ecclesiastical estates, and the regulation of interest rates.<sup>67</sup> However, the government was too weak to undertake reforms likely to provoke effective resistance, so in practice the old lay and clerical nobility retained much of their traditional authority until the late 1920s. They were, after all, the only group with any experience of rule, so many were elected to positions in the new government. Most continued to wear the traditional buttons of rank.<sup>68</sup>

Slow change masked simmering conflicts. At the third Party Congress in August 1924, Danzan, one of the revolutionaries who had met Lenin in 1920, was denounced and executed as a right winger. On the other side, a Lamaist pamphlet described communists as

heretical creatures, who have licked the mouth of the gun and sworn that they would be willing to kill their lama, teacher, father or mother, who tread on the *Zungdai* and the *Jadamba* and other Buddhist scriptures, or pass them under the knickers of Russian women or under pictures of them giving birth, and who, once they have taken the oath and joined, immediately conceive evil thoughts and fail to respect the Buddhist faith.<sup>69</sup>

When the Khutugtu died in 1924, high lamas immediately began to seek a new incarnation. An incarnation duly appeared in north Mongolia, but the government stalled on the emotive issue of a successor. In 1926 it issued a confused proclamation on the subject, giving theological rather than political reasons for not installing a successor.

The Jebtsundamba Khutugtus have deserved extremely well of our Mongol religion and state, and when it came to the Eighth Incarnation, he freed Mongolia from Chinese oppression and laid the foundation for it to become a state, cherishing and protecting it, and finally demonstrated the impermanence of this transitory world and passed away. And as there is a tradition that after the Eighth Incarnation he will not be reincarnated again, but thereafter will be reborn as the Great General Hanamand in the realm of Shambala [the traditional Buddhist paradise], there is no question of installing the subsequent, Ninth Incarnation. Nevertheless, many of his unenlightened disciples, with their fleshy eyes and stupid understanding, are unwilling to grasp this, so it is decreed that the Central Committee to be newly elected shall take charge of reporting this and clearing it up with the Dalai Lama.<sup>70</sup>

Not until 1929 did the new government formally ban the discovery of new incarnations of the Khutugtu.

During the 1920s, several leaders attempted unsuccessfully to secure international recognition and negotiate trade relations with the USA, Japan, or China. Nevertheless, for a few years outside influences did count. In the late 1920s, less than 20 percent of Mongolian exports went to the Soviet Union, while most of the 1,700 shops in the country were run by Chinese (1,450) and a smaller number by Europeans, so that about 75 percent of retail trade was controlled by non-Soviet foreigners. Private trade was mainly in foreign hands and European companies, mainly German, set up small industrial enterprises. German companies designed the first typewriter adapted for Mongolian script, produced the first Mongolian atlas, and manufactured Mongolia's military medals.

There were signs that Mongolia might drift away from the Soviet Union both politically and commercially, and emerge as a liberal democracy. Its electoral system threatened the power of the old nobility; a national bank had been created, and a national currency; and there had appeared the first shoots of modern educational and medical systems. The stability of the 1920s allowed significant economic growth. Livestock numbers rose from almost 10 million in 1918 to about 24 million in 1930, while Mongolia's human population rose to more than 700,000 in 1930.<sup>71</sup> Bawden comments that in 1928, "Mongolia was in fact making steady economic and social progress, not in the direction of communism, but along the divergent road of free enterprise."<sup>72</sup>

In 1928, there were few signs of the storm that was about to break. In 1927, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party still included many nobles, lamas,

and entrepreneurs, and was committed to gradual change.<sup>73</sup> At the seventh Party Congress, the Party Chairman, Dambadorj, insisted that

The elimination of private capital and the confiscation of the capital of the old feudal nobility and the *jas* of the lamaseries, are absolutely incompatible with the government's policies. The power of our party does not stretch to confronting the old feudal nobility, the rich and the lamas by any other policies than those in force at present.<sup>74</sup>

## MONGOLIA: 1930–1950

In 1929, Mongolia was finally caught up in the cyclone of Stalinist industrialization. Just under seven hundred years after Batu's armies conquered Rus', Mongolia became, in all but name, a colony of Moscow.

In 1928, Dambadorj traveled to Moscow to try to persuade the Comintern that the Soviet Union's policies of aggressive industrialization were not appropriate in Mongolia. He failed. In September 1928 a Comintern delegation was sent to Ulaanbaatar and it began to align Mongolian government policy more closely with that of the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> In 1929, under Soviet direction, Mongolia's government lurched violently to the left. The left turn began with a violent purge of Party members, including Dambadorj. Party numbers fell from 15,000 in 1928 to 12,000 in 1929, and then, after a massive influx of poorer herders (*arads*), rose to 42,000 members by 1932. By 1932, 80 percent of Party members were illiterate. A new revolutionary rhetoric attacked "cruel feudalists, shrewd lamas, greedy Chinese traders, and foreign capitalists and generals."<sup>76</sup>

Rupen argues that after 1928, "What had been a general and often imperfect correlation of Mongolian policies and procedures with Soviet ones became a meticulous and exact correspondence."<sup>77</sup> As Soviet control increased, the rest of the world was shut out. The Soviet Union monopolized Mongolian foreign trade and non-Russian foreigners ceased to work in Mongolia.

In contrast to Central Asia, Soviet policies in Mongolia were shaped by strategic concerns rather than by interest in Mongolian resources. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 enhanced Mongolia's importance as a buffer state. In 1945, Stalin would argue, presumably with unconscious irony, that the Soviet Union needed an "independent" Mongolia, because "if a military power were to attack through Mongolia and cut the Trans-Siberian Railway, the USSR would be finished."<sup>78</sup> In 1935, Soviet troops returned to Mongolia, and Mongolia became, in effect, a Soviet military region. Soviet military victories against Japanese forces at Khalkhyn Gol in eastern Mongolia in 1939, under Soviet marshals Zhukov and Konev, marked an important shift in the balance of power in this region and in the wider world. Defeated in Mongolia, Japanese expansionism now turned from Inner Eurasia towards the Pacific.

Inside Mongolia, the left turn generated its own chaotic momentum. Early in 1930, the now dominant leftists in the Mongolian People's Revolutionary

Party introduced a hopelessly ambitious Five-Year Plan that relied on massive Soviet aid. The government began to expropriate the remnants of the traditional possessing classes. In Mongolia this was a more complex maneuver than in the Soviet Union, where the old elites had been expelled during the Civil War. Late in 1929, a commission headed by Choibalsan, the future dictator, began to expropriate the livestock of nobles. Over 2,000 noble households lost their property between 1929 and 1932. Their livestock was distributed to newly formed collective farms, where many animals soon perished, or to poorer herdsmen who were even less able to care for them. A future President, J. Sambuu, described being sent to Tsetserleg, the capital of Arkhangai aimak, west of Ulaanbaatar, and given 20 days to expropriate the nobility and set up collective farms. With local activists he spent an entire night drawing up a list of nobles, both lay and clerical, and listing their property. The next day the activists rode off in three groups, and by midday they claimed to have registered the assets (primarily livestock) of their targets and warned their former owners not to dispose of them. They then called meetings of the poorer herdsmen to explain that the property of the rich was to be used as the basis for new collective farms.

Then the government attacked the lamaseries. They were forbidden to own land, to loan money at interest, or to compel herdsmen to look after their herds. For the first time, they were subjected to taxation. Their animals were handed over to collective farms, where most perished. The decimation of lamasery herds ruined many poor herders who had earned a living by looking after them. Lamasery property was confiscated, including precious books, paintings and ceremonial masks, costumes, and objects. The attack soon turned on organized religion in general. An Anti-Buddhist League was formed, modeled on the Soviet League of Atheists, and began distributing anti-religious propaganda. Party activists, many of them confused or scared herdsmen only just recruited into the Party, destroyed stupas or desecrated Buddhist icons by gouging out their eyes.

In 1930, the eighth Congress decided to abolish all private property, even that of poor herdsmen. One herdsman described the process as follows:

A man called Luvsantseren came to our *sumum* from the city to start the collective. He forced the *sumum*-people to set up a tent and gather there, and he kept us there for six days without food, and got at us to join the collective. Some two hundred herds-people were collectivized, and as directors of the collective there were chosen comrades who did not know black from white, and who ran around like sheep with the stagers.<sup>79</sup>

Most herdsmen regarded the herds of the collectives as stolen property and refused to take possession of them, so the animals died. Livestock numbers fell from 24 million in 1930 to 16 million in 1932.<sup>80</sup> For a country whose wealth consisted mainly of livestock this was a catastrophe on the scale of a major war.

Violence fed on violence. The Party launched its own version of dekulakization, mechanically dividing herders into three classes: the poor, the middling,

and the rich. It attacked the rich, and even some middle herdsmen, those with 20–100 *khuv*. (The *khuv*, a modern equivalent of the pre-revolutionary *bod*, was roughly equivalent to a horse, 7 sheep or 12 goats; before the revolution, the average wealth of herdsmen was about 40–45 *khuv*.)<sup>81</sup> Middle herdsmen were subjected to exorbitant taxes and denied rights to pasture and water, while their children were denied schooling. Many slaughtered their animals so as to reclassify themselves as poor herdsmen. The government abolished private trade, which ensured a serious goods famine.

None of this made sense to herders. Armed resistance broke out, mainly in the center and west of the country. The government used Soviet troops to suppress revolts. In May 1932, the government used tanks and troops to crush rebellions in western Mongolia, with many hundreds of casualties. Though many rebels were former nobles or lamas, they enjoyed widespread support from ordinary herders, and even from local Party members. Some rebels emigrated to China, and some resistance leaders began to call for reintegration into China and the installation of a new Jebtsundamba Khutugtu. In 1930, 700 armed lamas from Tögsbuyant lamasery in Uvs aimak, near the Tuvan border, overthrew the local government administration and set up their own administration. They demanded the destruction of the communist government, and sought help from warlord armies in Xinjiang. In 1932 there was an even more serious revolt at the Bandid Gegeen lamasery in Khuvsgul in the north-west. It was suppressed with extraordinary barbarity on both sides; some prisoners had their hearts ritually torn out, while some were flayed alive.<sup>82</sup>

By June 1932, as the Soviet Party began to fear it had overreached with collectivization in its heartland, the Mongolian Party was ordered to change course. International considerations may have played a role, as a weakened and chaotic Mongolia threatened the military security of Siberia. The Party was ordered to seek the support of lesser and middling lamas and herders, and there followed a breathing space lasting several years, which is known in official Mongolian historiography as the period of the “New Turn Policy.” Apart from demonstrating the extent of Soviet control over Mongolia, the chaos of the early 1930s had achieved little. Industrialization and collectivization would both be postponed in Mongolia until the 1950s.

The retreat of the mid-1930s went much further than in the Soviet Union. The official motto of the New Turn Policy was, “Raise high private initiative, and bring the private cattle-herding economy to a high level.”<sup>83</sup> The government offered financial help even to moderately wealthy herders, and disbanded some 800 collectives. It permitted 300 lamaseries to resume worship, and allowed a revival of traditional Tibetan medicine, for which, as yet, it could offer no modern alternative. Private retail trade was permitted. The government began to subsidize private household economies by paying for the digging of wells and the building of shelters for livestock. These measures, combined with subsidies from the USSR, helped revive traditional forms of rural production and commerce. Livestock numbers had risen to 22.6 million by 1935, almost returning to the level of 1930.<sup>84</sup>

These more relaxed policies ended with the removal of the Prime Minister, Gendung, in 1936. Gendung was regarded as a supporter of Mongolian tradition, and lacked enthusiasm for industrialization. When the Choibalsan Cloth Combine was burnt down, he argued that there was no need to rebuild it as most Mongols could make felt on their own.<sup>85</sup> Marshal Choibalsan would soon have his revenge. In February 1936, Stalin insisted that the Russian-educated Choibalsan be made the new leader. He would rule Mongolia until his death in 1951.

As a child, Choibalsan had lived in a lamasery before running away and enrolling in a Russian–Mongolian translation school. As a translator in the early 1920s, he came to know Mongolia's first group of pro-Russian radicals, including Boodoo and Sukhebaatur. He fought alongside them during the wars to expel the Chinese armies and the forces of Ungern-Sternberg. Throughout his career, he worked closely with Russian advisers and officials. His appointment as Party leader was followed by a revival of class war and a local version of the Stalinist purges.

Stalin saw Mongolia's Buddhists as a potential fifth column in the event of a Chinese attack, and demanded a new assault on lamas and lamaseries. In October 1937, the first Soviet-style show trials took place, with 23 lamas as the main defendants. In the next 18 months most of Mongolia's 800 monasteries were destroyed, and several thousand high-ranking lamas were purged and executed.<sup>86</sup> Other groups were also attacked, including Mongolian Kazakhs and Buriats, and immigrants from Inner Mongolia, who were accused of sympathy for Japan. Early in 1939, under direct orders from Voroshilov, Choibalsan arrested those who had directed the purges. Of the eight members of the Party Presidium elected in 1934, two died before the purge, and most of the rest during the purges, leaving Choibalsan himself as the lone survivor.<sup>87</sup> In 1940, 3,000 new officials were appointed, creating an entirely new political elite, many of them Soviet-educated. Like the Soviet *vydvizhentsy*, they owed their elevation to the purges and to Choibalsan.

Despite these massive social, political, and ideological changes, Mongolia's industrial sector remained tiny, and geared primarily towards the processing of livestock products. There was, however, significant investment in education, and the numbers of students in public schools rose from 40 (in one school) in 1921 to 24,000 (in 331 schools) in 1940.<sup>88</sup> Literacy rates rose to about 20 percent by 1940, a National University was established in 1942, and in 1941 the government announced the introduction of a new Cyrillic alphabet to replace Mongolia's traditional Uighur script. Many younger students began to learn Russian, now the second language in schools, as part of a larger process of Russianization of Mongolian culture.

Though dependent for most of his career on advice from Moscow, after 1945 Choibalsan began to show signs of independence and even of nationalism. In 1950, he resisted proposals to join the Soviet Union. At his death, Mongolia was indeed transformed. But Mongolia's economy and society remained backward, lingering still in the anteroom to the world of fossil fuels. Furthermore, despite formal independence, Mongolia remained part of the Soviet Empire, which dictated most of the Mongolian government's major decisions.

## XINJIANG: INDEPENDENCE AND WARLORD RULE, 1911–1949

For much of the early twentieth century, Xinjiang was the only part of Inner Eurasia beyond the direct control of the Soviet Empire. It provides, therefore, some hints as to what the history of Soviet Central Asia, and even Mongolia, might have looked like if these regions had escaped direct Soviet control. Nevertheless, in this period Xinjiang generally had closer economic and cultural relations with the Soviet Union than with China. Muslims in Xinjiang developed close relations with Soviet Central Asia, as did modernizers who were influenced by Jadidism. Xinjiang also exported cotton to the Soviet Union and imported Soviet manufactured goods. Particularly in the 1930s, when Soviet troops supported Xinjiang's warlord, Sheng Shicai, Xinjiang could reasonably be described as a Soviet "Protectorate."<sup>89</sup>

After 1911, when Chinese control broke down, Xinjiang was ruled for almost 40 years by regional warlords. After 1944, Xinjiang was reincorporated within China, first under the Guomindang, and then, after 1949, under a re-formed Chinese Empire, now ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. For most of this period, as during most of the region's history, Xinjiang had closer ties with Inner Eurasia than with China.

Travelers in the 1920s needed passports to cross from China into Xinjiang. The English missionaries Mildred Cable and Francesca French described what the border crossing could mean in practice.

Passports, permits, local passes and innumerable formalities began to harass the traveller as he moved about, and many Chinese who only gained entrance to Turkestan with difficulty have never been able to secure a permit to leave it again. As the years passed, during which rebellion and revolution shook both China and its New Dominion, the frontier regulations were still further tightened, and caravans often had to spend ten days or more in the unspeakable inns of Hsing-hsing-hsia while messages were exchanged between the commandant of the garrison and the Governor at Urumchi, whose personal permission had to be secured for each individual to pass on.<sup>90</sup>

In the 1920s, Xinjiang was ruled by a Chinese warlord, Yang Zengxin. Yang Zengxin had assumed power in Urumqi in 1911, when his boss, the former Qing governor, fled after the collapse of Qing power. At first, Yang Zengxin commanded just 2,000 Dungan troops from Kansu, but they made up the most powerful military force left in the region. Within a year, he had suppressed regional rebellions and secured control of most of Xinjiang.<sup>91</sup> Though his rule was relatively stable, it was also violent, nepotistic, corrupt, and autocratic. He siphoned vast wealth from government monopolies into private bank accounts in Manila, and governed through networks of relatives, officials, and local headmen who used their positions to enrich themselves.

The Swedish explorer Sven Hedin described Yang Zengxin as the most absolute ruler on earth.<sup>92</sup> He was famous for the brutality with which he treated his enemies. In 1916, during an official banquet, he suddenly left the room



and returned with a soldier who was ordered to behead one of the guests. The same ritual occurred twice more, before Yang Zengxin sat down to enjoy a hearty meal. Some of his subordinates were even nastier. Ma Fu-hsing, or Ma Ti-tai, an illiterate Hui soldier whom Yang appointed as ruler of Kashgar for eight years, used punishments that would not have seemed out of place during the Mongol invasions. According to a White Russian resident, P. S. Nazarov, he regularly crucified and maimed his victims. Nazarov lived in Kashgar for four years, and frequently saw “bundles of men’s amputated arms or feet nailed to the city gates, with notices stating whose members they were and why they were cut off. Sometimes the lawful owner of the arms or legs would be chained to the wall with them.”<sup>93</sup>

Yang Zengxin saw threats to his power both in traditional Islam and in modern ideas and technologies. Though tolerant of Islam, he restricted missionary activity, the building of new mosques, and pilgrimages to Mecca. In the 1920s, he particularly feared the spread of new ideas from Soviet Central Asia. As a British official in Kashgar explained:

The ambitious young workman from Kashgar or Ili goes over to Russia to get a temporary job and at once finds himself in a land of unveiled women, railways, motor-cars, cinemas, and all that he believes to constitute the acme of modern civilisation.

Yang forced restaurants to put up signs saying, “no political discussions allowed.” He even closed most schools, except those attached to mosques.<sup>94</sup>

Independent Xinjiang no longer enjoyed Chinese subsidies, and during the Soviet Civil War it could not even trade its cotton for manufactured goods from Soviet Central Asia. In the 1920s, Yang encouraged trade with Soviet Central Asia, and by 1928 that trade was worth 10 times as much as the trade with China. Railways pointed Xinjiang westwards. The Soviet rail network, in particular the rapidly advancing Turksib line, reduced transportation costs to Central Asia, at a time when trade with China was still carried by caravans that took three to four months to reach Urumqi from Tianjin.<sup>95</sup> In the 1920s, Chinese officials found it easier and faster to travel from Nanking to Urumqi via Vladivostok, along the Trans-Siberian and Turksib railroads, rather than through China and Kansu. These differences not only raised Soviet prestige in Xinjiang, they also gave the Soviet Union considerable influence over Xinjiang’s official relations with China.<sup>96</sup>

Yang resisted the building of paved roads to China, and instituted strict censorship of newspapers and the telegraph. Rumor had it that, though he allowed the telegraph, he personally kept the keys to the Urumqi telegraph office, “opening the door in the morning and locking it again each night.”<sup>97</sup> But he did introduce some modernizing reforms. He invested in improvements to irrigation, and built some new roads. However, he is best seen as the leader of an oppressive and corrupt rent-seeking elite network with no long-term vision for Xinjiang. This was traditional, self-interested mobilization, using some modern technology and a few modernizing elements.

Yang's real priorities are suggested by the fact that at the end of his rule, investment in building and communications accounted for 0.13 percent of the budget, while the military budget accounted for 72 percent.<sup>98</sup> His corruption generated such discontent that in 1926 he asked the missionaries Mildred Cable and Francesca French to take his son out of the province. Two years later, he was assassinated, appropriately, at a banquet, whose waiters turned out to be hired assassins.<sup>99</sup> Yang would enjoy a posthumous revenge when his eventual successor, Jin Shuren (1883–1941), had the leader of the coup against Yang executed.

Jin Shuren followed Yang's model as a ruler, though in the opinion of most historians, he was less able than his former boss. He held power for just five years, from 1928–1933, during which Xinjiang drifted into civil war, and further into the Soviet orbit.

Mildred Cable and Francesca French capture well the strange mixture of archaic traditions, chaos, and brutality of Xinjiang in these years. In one vignette of life in this period, they describe a theatrical entertainment they saw in the 1930s:

First of all two bullock carts appeared laden with roughly made stage properties and some simple scenery, and with the carts came thirty men dressed in shabby clothes. They walked with a light springy step and carried large wooden boxes slung from a pole between each two men. These boxes held their precious costumes – faded, ragged, embroidered dresses, elaborate tinsel headgear, flowing beards made from the soft white tail of the Tibetan yak, and the mock implements of war which take a large place in Chinese historic drama. ... In a very short while after arrival the players and musicians appeared dressed for their parts, and the musicians' band of cymbals, pipes, flutes and drums crashed out the most hideous din that mortal ears ever heard. The effect on the oasis dwellers was almost hypnotic. They had come in their bullock carts from every oasis within reach of the temple, and the crowd was composed of men and women, old and young, and children of every age.<sup>100</sup>

The play went on for 18 hours with breaks for meals. Like most traditional theater, it was about warfare and politics, love and death.

Later in their trip, the missionaries would encounter the harsh realities of civil war. One evening, they asked for the hospitality of a local farming household, and were taken in.

As we sat round the brazier and ate fried dough-cakes together, there was the rap of a riding-whip on the outside door. Our host and his wife exchanged one anxious look, then he went to unbar the heavy gate. A moment later an officer of the brigand [Dungan] army strode in. "Measure out five bushels of wheat for my men," he said, "and be quick about it." "Your men have been here three times already, and have taken everything I have," said the farmer. "Five bushels of wheat," was the only answer. "Truly I have not got it," said the old man. Out came the riding-whip, and the farmer's back was lashed with all the strength of the young soldier's arm. "How can I give you what I have not got?" our host said with quiet dignity. The blows rained again on the old man's head and shoulders, and, helpless to resist he went to the corn-bin which held the small supply of

grain for the family food, opened the little hatch near the floor and swept out all the remaining wheat into the gaping mouth of the sack held open by the brigand officer's retainers. A moment later we heard the clattering hoofs of horses trotting swiftly toward a neighbouring farmstead. ... Our host, without a word of anger or of complaint, took off his cotton coat and with his hand felt the weals on his neck and shoulders, then he came and joined our circle round the brazier again. Such is the patient endurance of men who have never seen human rights maintained, the cause of the poor vindicated, nor the rich and mighty brought under a law of equality.<sup>101</sup>

Peter Fleming, who traveled through Xinjiang in the time of Jin Shuren, wrote that the warlord displayed a “rapacity ... insufficiently supported by administrative talent.”<sup>102</sup> His rule was quite as corrupt and nepotistic as Yang Zengxin's, but his grip on the region was less secure. He promoted relatives to high office, and with their help managed profitable monopolies on trades such as gold, jade, and karakul wool. Chinese officials were reputed to control over 50 percent of commerce in the capital, Urumqi.<sup>103</sup>

Unlike Yang, who cultivated elites from different religious and ethnic groups, Jin Shuren embarked on a policy of Sinicization that enraged Turkic leaders. He angered Torgut Mongols by executing their leader, the Tsetsen Puntsag Gegeen.<sup>104</sup> According to the British consul in Urumqi, Jin offered the Torgut leader a cup of tea, then led him out to a courtyard where, following traditional rules of etiquette, he was seated on a red carpet before an executioner shot him in the head.

The rebellion that touched the lives of Mildred Cable and Francesca French broke out in 1931, when Jin Shuren tried to end the semi-autonomous status of the khanate of Hami (Qumul). His action sparked a brutal, multi-sided six-year civil war that touched all parts of Xinjiang and drew in Soviet forces and Central Asian rebels. In November 1933, an “Eastern Turkestan Republic” was founded in the far west, which remains, to this day, a potent symbol for Uighur nationalists. The short-lived republic included both traditional and modernizing (or Jadidist) Islamist elements, but Forbes describes it as “the direct spiritual successor” of Ya'qub Beg's nineteenth-century emirate based on Kashgar.<sup>105</sup>

The complex geography of the civil wars reflected the ancient divisions between Xinjiang's three main regions, the Tarim basin, Uighuristan, and Zungharia. The archaic nature of the wars is captured well in the following account by a Franco-Russian engineer. It describes an attack by the Dungan army of Ma Zhongying on the Chinese garrison at Hami on the night of July 3, 1931. Except for the presence of machine guns, the fighting is eerily reminiscent of Batu's attacks on the cities of Rus'.

Suddenly, to the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets, the glacis [earth fortifications] swarmed with men rushing towards the high city wall. The front rank consisted of Chinese peasants (conscripts from Kansu) carrying scaling ladders, who were driven forward by Tungan soldiers armed with huge curved swords. The air was rent by the shrill battle cries of the Tungans and the yells of defiance of the defenders. In spite of a murderous fire, ladders were placed at

different spots, and the rebels ... began to climb up one after the other. Then the defenders discarded their firearms for pikes and axes, and hurtled down on the attackers heavy rocks, blazing tow soaked in oil and hand-grenades ... Notwithstanding the stubborn defence, several scaling ladders were placed against the wall, and the Tungans clambered up one after another. Many were speared or pushed away, but as they fell on the ground others took their place. Then the cannonade ceased, and only the clash of steel, the cries of the wounded, and an occasional pistol shot could be heard as hand-to-hand fighting began on the wall itself ... just when the place seemed to be doomed a machine gun, which up to this had been silent ... suddenly came to life. Emplaced in a blockhouse flanking the wall, it opened fire, mowing down the assault, and the glacis was soon cleared except for heaps of corpses.<sup>106</sup>

Military weakness forced Jin to ask for outside support. In 1931, Jin employed veteran White Russian soldiers to recapture Hami (Qumul). He also hired two Soviet biplanes with their pilots.

In September 1933, Jin Shuren fled to China through Siberia. The new de facto ruler of Xinjiang was Sheng Shicai, a Japanese-trained Chinese general, appointed by Jin Shuren in 1930 to head Xinjiang's army. He arrived from China after traveling through the Soviet Union. In 1934, the Soviet Union sent 7,000 GPU troops to support his rule and prevent a collapse that might invite an invasion from Manchuria, which Japanese forces had occupied in 1931. In January 1934, Soviet troops expelled the Hui (Muslim Chinese) armies of Ma Zhongying from the Urumqi region, and by 1937, with Soviet military and financial support, Sheng Shicai controlled most of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang now became an informal part of the Soviet Union's Inner Eurasian empire. In return for loans and military support, Sheng offered the Soviet Union concessions to mine gold, manganese, uranium, and tungsten, and even to prospect for oil. Soviet military, police, and economic and political advisers began to play such an important role in Xinjiang's government that the Swedish traveler Sven Hedin described the Soviet Consul-General, Apresov, as "more powerful than Sheng."<sup>107</sup> Sheng adopted a Soviet-style nationalities policy that incorporated regional ethnic elites more effectively into his government. Under the influence of Soviet nationalities policy, he also officially recognized the ethnicity of "Uighur" for the first time in 1934. The term Uighur had first been used by Russian scholars who argued that those who lived in Xinjiang's northern oases were descendants of the ancient Turfan Uighur kingdom that had flourished under Chinggis Khan. Like Soviet nationalities' policy in general, Sheng's recognition of Uighur nationhood was really an attempt to tame nationalism and co-opt the intellectuals who took nationhood seriously, in this case, Jadidist-influenced Chinese Muslims.<sup>108</sup>

Sheng tolerated the Muslim establishment, allowed sharia law to function in many regions, and supported local clergy with government grants. In the late 1930s, Sheng introduced Soviet-style purges of dissidents as Stalin was removing Central Asian pan-Turkists and nationalists as enemies of the people. Sheng purged between 50,000 and 100,000 people.<sup>109</sup> In 1938 he traveled with his family to Moscow and joined the Soviet Communist Party.

In June 1938 the British consul in Xinjiang reported:

Soviet Russia has at last regained in full the influence Russia used to exercise in Imperial days, and which was temporarily lost, as a result of the Russian revolution, during the period 1917–31; Russian methods, Russian ideas and Russian trade predominate throughout the province; most of the important posts in the province are filled by Russophile officials (often Russian-trained and speaking Russian); and both provincial and local authorities frequently seek the advice and assistance of the Russian Consular establishment in the province, to which advice and assistance they attach great weight.<sup>110</sup>

But just as Xinjiang seemed to be falling into the Soviet Empire, ties with the Soviet Union were abruptly cut after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Soviet troops and experts left, Sheng cut off relations with the Soviet Communist Party, and trade with the Soviet Union collapsed. Severing ties with Soviet Central Asia was economically ruinous, particularly for the northern and western regions of Xinjiang, and particularly for Kazakh groups who had got used once again to migrating between Soviet and Chinese territory. Sheng also cut ties with the Chinese Communist Party, and executed Mao Zedong's younger brother, who was in Urumqi. He established relations with the Guomindang, who sent troops into Xinjiang. In 1943 Sheng turned on the Guomindang, in the hope of regaining Soviet support, but he received none, and Guomindang forces removed him from office in 1944.

Under the Guomindang, Xinjiang would once again become part of a larger Chinese polity, and Han migration to the region began once again. In August 1945, the Soviet Union signed a treaty surrendering control of most of Xinjiang to the Guomindang. From now on, the Soviet Union would stay clear of most of Xinjiang, though up until 1949, it supported a second East Turkestan Republic in the Ili region in the far west.

In 1949, Communist Chinese troops of the People's Liberation Army entered Xinjiang, the Guomindang commander surrendered, and so did the leaders of the East Turkestan Republic. After 1949, Xinjiang would be firmly incorporated within a revived Chinese Empire ruled, now, by the Chinese Communist Party. Sheng Shicai survived in exile with the Guomindang in Taiwan.

## *CONCLUSIONS: THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY IN EASTERN INNER EURASIA*

Kazakhstan, Soviet Central Asia, Siberia, Mongolia, and Xinjiang were all shaped in different ways by the colossal changes taking place in the Soviet and Chinese heartlands. Xinjiang remained for the most part beyond the reach of both the Chinese and Soviet governments, though its warlords would become increasingly dependent on Soviet trade and even Soviet military forces, as China collapsed into civil war. In all the other regions of central and eastern

Inner Eurasia, Soviet control was direct and non-negotiable, and it was managed primarily in the interests of the Soviet heartland. That meant that policies were directed by the industrial and strategic needs of the Soviet Union, which made little effort to industrialize outlying regions of its empire. Nor did it put much effort into changing the cultural traditions of these regions. And that explains why, despite Soviet attempts at cultural, social, and political reform, local ways of doing things often survived, particularly in Muslim and Buddhist regions. How much had survived would become clear only after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

## NOTES

- 1 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 337–338.
- 2 Bennigsen, “Islamic or Local Consciousness,” 176–177; on the Jadid movement see Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*.
- 3 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 259; Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 121–123, 376; Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, 114.
- 4 Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 108.
- 5 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, 115; Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 166, estimates that there may have been several hundred new-method schools by 1917.
- 6 Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, 352.
- 7 Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 293, 297.
- 8 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 131.
- 9 The following is based on Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 103–105.
- 10 Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge*, 19.
- 11 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 394.
- 12 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 37–38.
- 13 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 235.
- 14 This account based on Wheeler, *Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, 108–110; on the economic roots of the Basmachi movement see Lorenz, “Economic Bases of the Basmachi Movement”; and see Broxup, “The Basmachi.”
- 15 Smith, “Non-Russians,” 497; Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge*, 34.
- 16 Khalid, “Society and Politics in Bukhara.”
- 17 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 243–244.
- 18 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 402.
- 19 Cited from Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 42.
- 20 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 171; Smith, *Red Nations*, 76–80.
- 21 Martin, “An Affirmative-Action Empire,” 103; Smith, *Red Nations*, 84.
- 22 Fierman, *Soviet Central Asia*, 24.
- 23 Smith, *Red Nations*, 104.
- 24 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 18.
- 25 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 156; Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 15.
- 26 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 156.
- 27 Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’,” 239.
- 28 Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge*, 46.
- 29 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 19.
- 30 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 18.
- 31 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 87.

- 32 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 94–95.
- 33 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 19.
- 34 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 662.
- 35 Hartley, *Siberia*, 172–174.
- 36 Hartley, *Siberia*, 185.
- 37 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 131.
- 38 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 254–255.
- 39 Hartley, *Siberia*, 196–197.
- 40 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 131–132; Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 242.
- 41 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 24.
- 42 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 248.
- 43 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 152; Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 244–245.
- 44 S. A. Ratner-Shternberg, cited in Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 150.
- 45 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 197–198.
- 46 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 236–241.
- 47 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 665.
- 48 Hughes, *Stalin, Siberia and the Crisis of the New Economic Policy*, 24; Hartley, *Siberia*, 202.
- 49 Hartley, *Siberia*, 205–206.
- 50 Forsyth, *History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 293–296.
- 51 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 662.
- 52 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 665.
- 53 Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, 352–354.
- 54 Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, 359.
- 55 Hartley, *Siberia*, 219.
- 56 On class distinctions in Qing Mongolia, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 507–508; and Bawden, *Modern History*, 160.
- 57 Cited from Sanders, *Mongolia*, 33; but see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 508.
- 58 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 17–18.
- 59 Cited in Bawden, *Modern History*, 209–210.
- 60 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 24, makes this point; he adds that Ungern-Sternberg was fascinated by Damjintsuren and copied his “flamboyant and cruel ways.”
- 61 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 31–32.
- 62 Bawden, *Modern History*, 234.
- 63 Bawden, *Modern History*, 231.
- 64 Nakami, Batbayar, and Boldbaatar, “Mongolia,” 355–356.
- 65 Bawden, *Modern History*, 246.
- 66 Bawden, *Modern History*, 251.
- 67 Sanders, *Mongolia*, 34.
- 68 Bawden, *Modern History*, 256.
- 69 Cited in Bawden, *Modern History*, 265.
- 70 Bawden, *Modern History*, 262–263.
- 71 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 474.
- 72 Bawden, *Modern History*, 290–291.
- 73 Bawden, *Modern History*, 290–291.
- 74 Bawden, *Modern History*, 284.
- 75 Nakami et al., “Mongolia,” 356–357.
- 76 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 329–330; Bawden, *Modern History*, 249.
- 77 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 38.
- 78 Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 45.

- 79 Cited in Bawden, *Modern History*, 310.  
 80 Bawden, *Modern History*, 311, and Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 330.  
 81 Bawden, *Modern History*, 311.  
 82 Nakami et al., “Mongolia,” 358; Bawden, *Modern History*, 319–320.  
 83 Bawden, *Modern History*, 351.  
 84 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 405.  
 85 Bawden, *Modern History*, 354.  
 86 Nakami et al., “Mongolia,” 358.  
 87 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 210.  
 88 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 475.  
 89 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 415.  
 90 Cable and French, *Gobi Desert*, 134.  
 91 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 11.  
 92 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 14.  
 93 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 15, 22.  
 94 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 19.  
 95 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 186.  
 96 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 42.  
 97 Qin, “Western China (Xinjiang),” 378–379; Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 14.  
 98 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 184; Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 41.  
 99 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 36.  
 100 Cable and French, *Gobi Desert*, 29–30.  
 101 Cable and French, *Gobi Desert*, 250–251.  
 102 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 189.  
 103 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 39–40.  
 104 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 71.  
 105 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 114. On the Eastern Turkestan Republic, Roberts, “Imagining Uyghurstan.”  
 106 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 57.  
 107 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 137.  
 108 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 208, and see Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*.  
 109 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 210, 247.  
 110 Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, 147.

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# [16] 1950–1991: *THE HEARTLAND: A PLATEAU, DECLINE, AND COLLAPSE*

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## *INTRODUCTION: GLOBAL PROCESSES*

In the second half of the twentieth century, there was an astonishing global economic and technological boom that some have described as the “Great Acceleration.” So rapid was growth, so fast was technological change, and so vast and diverse were human impacts on the biosphere that many scholars see the late twentieth century as the start of a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. Humans began mobilizing resources on such a scale that they became the most important single force for change on the surface of planet Earth.<sup>1</sup>

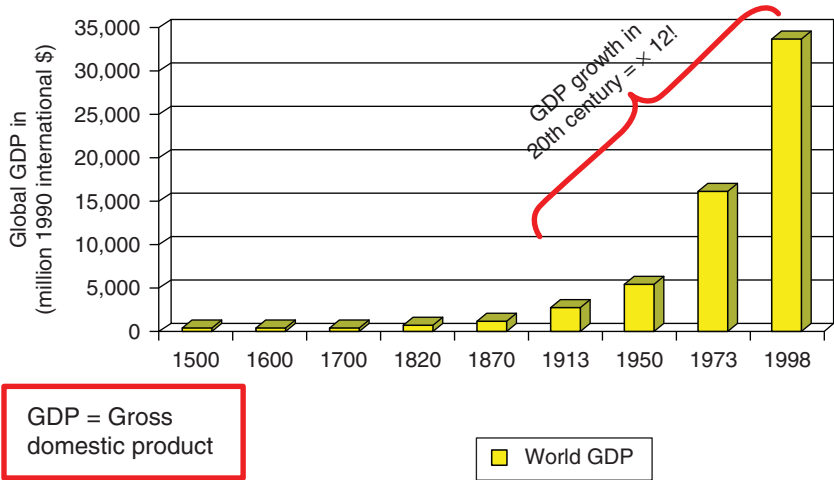
Economic statistics offer a pale reflection of these changes. We customarily focus on economic growth, but that of course is ultimately a measure of the scale on which humans mobilize the animals, the plants, the rivers, the energy, and the minerals of the biosphere. The acceleration was synergized by a new pulse of globalization. Between 1913 and 1950, the total value of international trade had fallen from about 8 percent of world production to just 5.5 percent. Then exports rose to about 10.5 percent in 1973 and to an astonishing 17 percent by 1998.<sup>2</sup> Global exchanges spread innovations and stimulated economic growth. In the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, rates of economic growth were faster than ever before (or after) in human history. Figures 16.1–16.3 illustrate some of the large changes in global GDP and global GDP per capita (the most general measure of increasing productivity) over long periods, to highlight the unprecedented growth rates of the late twentieth century.

Technological and organizational changes, many pioneered during the wars of the early twentieth century, drove growth. There were innovations in aviation, in health, in agriculture, in communications, and in how governments and corporations managed research, investment, and production. Nuclear power, developed as a result of massive wartime projects to develop nuclear weapons,

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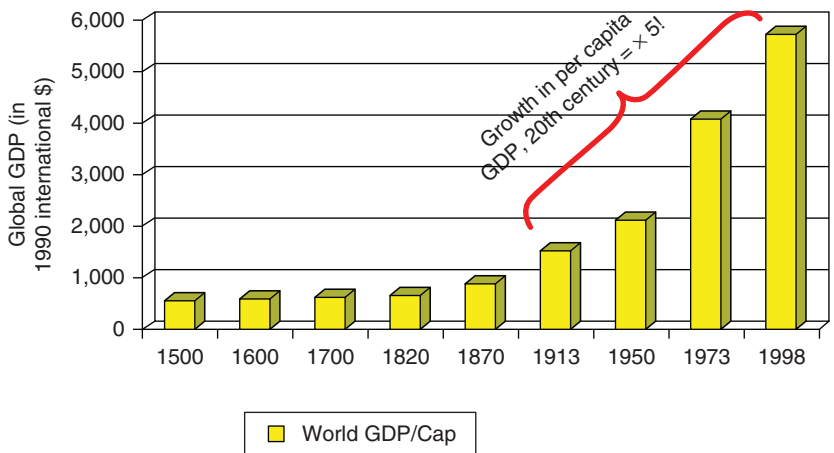
*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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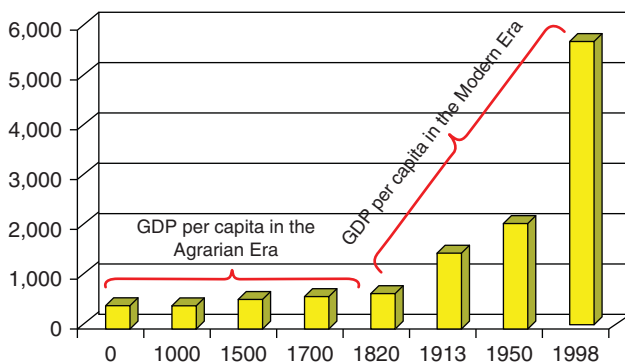


**Figure 16.1** Global GDP, 1500–1998, based on figures from Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 261.

added to the energy bonanza of fossil fuels and spun off new insights into fundamental physics. Computers, developed originally to help break enemy codes, improved the management of financial systems, manufacturing processes, government bureaucracies, and scientific research and accelerated global exchanges of information. As more countries and regions entered the fossil fuels era, energy was consumed faster than ever before. Figure 10.3 suggests that between 1900 and 1950, global energy consumption increased by about two and a half times, and then by about five and a half times between



**Figure 16.2** Global GDP per person, 1500–1998, based on figures from Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 264.



**Figure 16.3** Growth in GDP per person over two millennia, based on figures from Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 264.

1950 and 2000. By some estimates, global GDP multiplied by seven times in the second half of the twentieth century. Never before had humans been so numerous, or mobilized the resources of the biosphere on such a vast scale.

These momentous changes provide the backdrop to the history of Inner Eurasia in the second half of the twentieth century, because they put increasing stress on efficient mobilization of resources. In the Stalin era, low rates of growth in the capitalist world flattered the Soviet economy. In the second half of the twentieth century, faster growth rates in the capitalist world made Soviet growth seem less impressive, and highlighted its inefficiency.

The second half of the twentieth century was also an era of decolonization and imperial breakdown. So weakened were Europe's major powers by the end of World War II that they could no longer defend the global empires they had acquired from the late nineteenth century. Decolonization created new, independent nations, all of which had to find their way in a rapidly changing world. And they soon found that disparities in wealth, power, and industrial development exposed them to new forms of exploitation as they, too, tried to enter the world of fossil fuels. In Inner Eurasia, however, there was no decolonization after World War II. Here, decolonization would begin only at the end of the twentieth century, and would take distinctive forms.

A third crucial feature of the late twentieth century was the Cold War. Though happy to purchase western technology, the Soviet Union cut itself off from the capitalist world commercially, politically, and ideologically. Two world coalitions emerged, both of which would be courted by weaker or smaller powers, many of them former colonies. The two blocs were technological, ideological, economic, and military rivals, and their rivalry would dominate the second half of the twentieth century. Ultimately, the rivalry was between different mobilizational strategies, and in the middle of the century the Soviet Union looked like a mobilizational success. By the mid-1960s the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons, the missiles needed to deliver them, and the largest armies in the world. The first human space flight, by Yuri Gagarin on April 12, 1961,

offered a stunning demonstration of Soviet technological and military prowess. The Soviet Union achieved military (though not yet economic) parity with the USA, the world's first modern superpower. With the development of nuclear weapons, both superpowers now had the power, if they chose, to launch attacks so destructive that they would have ruined much of the biosphere within just a few hours.

The Soviet system had clearly got some things right. And after the death of Stalin, the turbulence of the first half of the century gave way to a period of stability, during which many Soviet citizens felt that they were finally reaping the rewards of industrialization. That is why so many other countries were tempted to borrow from the Soviet formula for industrialization.

Then, in the 1970s, signs began to accumulate that the system was running down. Like the Russia of Catherine the Great, the Soviet system seemed to have reached a mobilizational plateau. As mobilizational pressure declined, accelerating growth rates in the capitalist world exposed the limitations of a strategy that was good at mobilizing resources, but less good at using them efficiently, because it had dispensed with the market driver of growth and innovation.

This chapter describes the Soviet mobilizational system in its most successful era, and in the era of decline. The system's weaknesses were hidden at first by the discovery of vast new stores of fossil fuels in its Inner Eurasian hinterlands. These kept the machine running as efficiency declined. Lulled into complacency, the Soviet *nomenklatura* settled into lives of power and privilege, while the Soviet mobilizational machine began to splutter and wheeze, and innovation stalled. In the mid-1980s, Soviet leaders attempted a radical overhaul, but succeeded only in weakening the machine further, just as the Great Reforms of the nineteenth century had destabilized the Tsarist system. But this time, events moved so fast that in 1991, just six years after reforms began, the Soviet mobilizational system fell apart, collapsing as suddenly as the Mongol Empire after the death of Khan Mongke.

## *THE SOVIET HEARTLAND, 1953–1991: A MOBILIZATIONAL PLATEAU*

In the middle of the twentieth century, Soviet citizens born 50 years earlier had lived through changes as astonishing as those experienced by the followers of Chinggis Khan. The Soviet Union was now a superpower, and after the communist conquest of Inner Eurasia's other superpower, China, almost half the world's population lived under communist regimes. It began to seem that the mobilizational systems that dominated Inner Eurasia might end up dominating the world.

### DESTALINIZATION: CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Stalin's death, on March 5, 1953, came as a profound shock. Millions of Soviet citizens had revered and feared Stalin in equal measure, and most could not

imagine a future without him. The poet Yevgenii Yevtushenko remembered his own reaction:

I found it almost impossible to imagine him dead, so much had he been an indispensable part of life. A sort of general paralysis came over the country. Trained to believe that Stalin was taking care of everyone, people were lost and bewildered without him. The whole of Russia wept. So did I. We wept sincerely with grief and perhaps also with fear for the future.<sup>3</sup>

None of Stalin's lieutenants controlled all the threads from which Soviet policy was woven. And like Timur, Stalin did not nominate a successor. With a strong central government, but no obvious successor, some form of collective leadership was unavoidable.

In the days and weeks after Stalin's death, the survivors of Stalin's inner circle maneuvered cautiously in a dangerous, foggy, and unpredictable environment, fearing that the colossal pressures under which the system operated might blow it apart. Khrushchev admitted in his memoirs, "We were scared – really scared. We were afraid the thaw might unleash a flood, which we wouldn't be able to control and which would drown us."<sup>4</sup> Their sense of personal and collective danger had intensified just weeks before Stalin's death, when he announced the discovery of a plot to overthrow the leadership – the "Doctors' Plot" – which was led by elite Kremlin doctors. Members of Stalin's immediate circle feared this was the start of a new purge that would sweep them all away. They were jittery, and their fears would soon be heightened by prison camp mutinies in the Vorkuta region, and an uprising in East Berlin in June.

Their nervousness explains some skittish policy decisions taken just after Stalin's death that look like attempts to release pressure by appeasing the population. On March 27, an amnesty for non-political prisoners in the camps freed more than a million prisoners. Those released included former members of the Soviet ruling elite, such as Molotov's wife, Zhemchuzhina (personally returned to Molotov by Beria), and Mikoyan's son.<sup>5</sup> On April 1, prices were slashed on basic consumer goods by an average of 10 percent, and wages were raised by 8 percent during 1953. The new leaders increased planned output for consumer goods, and in 1953, for the first time since the 1920s, the production of consumer goods rose faster than that of producer goods. In August, the government reduced taxes on the private plots of collective farmers, and increased the prices it paid for procurements from collective and state farms. Production rose immediately on private plots. These shifts – pale reminders of the "retreats" of 1921 and 1934 – had an immediate effect on the popular mood. By agreeing to an armistice in the Korean War in July, the new leadership also lowered international tensions.

With Stalin gone, institutions mattered once more. Most members of the new leadership felt threatened by the NKVD (the Ministry of Internal Affairs) and its leader, Beria, and they began to chip away at the NKVD's power. Just weeks after Stalin's death, the NKVD announced that there was no foundation to the "Doctors' Plot." On April 10 the Central Committee condemned

“violations of legality” by the security organs. Beria, an obvious candidate for the leadership, was now as exposed as Trotsky had been after the death of Lenin.

In his memoirs, Khrushchev claimed credit for the delicate maneuvers that led to Beria’s arrest on June 28 at a meeting of the Presidium (as the Politburo was called between 1952 and 1966). Beria controlled the Presidium bodyguard, so senior military commanders, including General Moskalenko, the air defense commander, and Marshal Zhukov were invited to attend the decisive meeting and given permission to carry their weapons as they waited in an anteroom. Khrushchev describes what followed.

We arranged for Moskalenko’s group to wait for a summons in a separate room while the session was taking place. [When Malenkov pressed a button to give the prearranged signal, the generals entered the room.] “Hands up” Zhukov commanded Beria. Moskalenko and the others unbuckled their holsters in case Beria tried anything.<sup>6</sup>

The operation went smoothly and Beria’s police bodyguard did not try to prevent his arrest. After a brief trial, he was executed in December.

These changes began to lower the extreme tensions of high Stalinism. As in the 1920s, changes in the balance of power within the Soviet system were shaped by disputes over the succession. With Beria gone, the secret police now had no representative in the Presidium, and early in 1954, the new leadership broke up the NKVD’s vast empire. The ordinary police stayed within a shrunken Ministry of Internal Affairs, while the secret police were placed under a new party committee, the “Committee of State Security” or KGB, headed by a Khrushchev loyalist, I. A. Serov. GULAG, the labor camp administration, was effectively abolished in 1957, when it was placed under the Ministry of Justice. The number of political prisoners fell sharply in the 1950s, and by the 1970s, Amnesty International estimated that there were no more than 10,000 political prisoners in a total prison population of almost 1 million.<sup>7</sup>

With the secret police cut down to size, two institutions now dominated the system: the Party and the government apparatus headed by the Council of Ministers. Stalin himself had often bypassed the Party in recent years, which may explain why Malenkov, when given the choice in March 1953 between a Party position and a position in the government apparatus, chose to become Chairman of the Council of Ministers. This left Khrushchev as the leading figure in the Party apparatus, and it soon became clear that, with Stalin dead and the secret police weakened, the Party and its Secretariat once again enjoyed the strategic advantages that had helped bring Stalin to power in the 1920s. Once again, it was the only Soviet institution with influence over officials within all the other governmental structures of Party, police, government, and army.

Power flowed back to the Party, as if by a law of Soviet political gravity that had been temporarily suspended by Stalin. In September 1953, Khrushchev became the First Secretary of the Party’s Central Committee. He immediately began to fill key institutions with members of his own informal political

networks. By 1956, about one third of Central Committee members had served under Khrushchev in the Ukrainian or Moscow Party machines.

Khrushchev maneuvered skillfully. In 1954, he resisted Malenkov's populist tactic of switching investment from heavy industry to consumer goods industries. This earned Khrushchev support within the powerful military and heavy goods ministries. In 1954, he launched the "Virgin Lands" program, whose aim was to increase food supplies by bringing the Kazakh steppes under the plow, while rallying the Party and people behind a grandiose new project.<sup>8</sup> (See Chapter 17.)

In February 1955, Malenkov resigned as Prime Minister. Khrushchev now emerged as the dominant figure within the collective leadership. In 1956, he took the unexpected gamble of criticizing Stalin during a secret session of the twentieth Party Congress. He criticized Stalin mainly for his assault on the Communist Party, but Khrushchev's personal bitterness came out in asides excluded from the official transcript. According to one attendee, Khrushchev denounced Stalin as a coward, saying, "Not once during the whole war did he dare go to the front."<sup>9</sup> Khrushchev was not alone in seeking a reckoning with the Stalinist legacy. His "secret" speech was probably drafted by the historian P. N. Pospelov. It praised Stalin's achievements before 1934, implicitly asserting the legitimacy of the one-party state, of the Party's leadership, and of both collectivization and the industrialization drive. But the speech condemned the increase in Stalin's personal power after 1934, and his violent assault on Party cadres during the purges. It also condemned many of his decisions before and during the war. Its main target was not the Party or the system, but Stalin's personal power, his "cult of personality." The speech praised the Soviet system, while blaming Stalin for its most serious failings and flaws.

Khrushchev's colleagues in the Presidium were appalled. Stalin's personal prestige had legitimized the Soviet system for so long that they feared Khrushchev's criticisms would undermine it. And they were at least partly right. News of the "secret speech" soon leaked out, prompting pro-Stalin demonstrations in Stalin's home republic of Georgia, covert anti-Soviet demonstrations in the Baltic republics, and eventually uprisings in Poland and Hungary. The speech alienated the Chinese leadership and prompted many communists outside the Soviet Union to resign from the Party. In 1957, a majority of Khrushchev's Presidium colleagues voted to sack him.

That should have ended Khrushchev's brief career as Party leader. But his rivals had underestimated the leverage Khrushchev now had through the Party apparatus. The secret speech had appealed to many within the Party, particularly those less close to Stalin. Khrushchev insisted that only the Party Central Committee, which formally elected the Presidium, had the power to sack him. With help from the army and KGB, both now headed by Khrushchev loyalists, members of the Central Committee were flown to Moscow from all parts of the Soviet Union. With Serov, the head of the KGB, in charge of the Kremlin guard, members of the Central Committee demanded a formal meeting of the Central Committee. The Presidium reluctantly agreed, Khrushchev was reinstated, and over the next few months, with the blessing of the Central Committee, he expelled his rivals, finally breaking up the leadership team



formed by Stalin since the 1920s. Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov were removed from office, but that was the extent of their punishment. Kaganovich, one of Stalin's toughest enforcers, phoned Khrushchev two days after the Central Committee meeting, begging him "not to allow them to deal with me as they dealt with people under Stalin."<sup>10</sup>

By now, Khrushchev enjoyed something like the level of power that Stalin had in the early 1930s. He was undisputed leader of the Party and government, and already the subject of a small-scale cult of leadership. But his power still rested on, and could still be limited by, the Party apparatus. Between 1957 and Khrushchev's removal by the Presidium in 1964, Khrushchev failed (and may not even have tried) to create the type of arbitrary personal power that Stalin had wielded from the mid-1930s. Occasionally Khrushchev took decisions on his own authority that should have been taken by the Presidium or the Central Committee. He may even have tried to outflank the Party apparatus by increasing Party membership and setting limits on the tenure of Party officials. He tried to increase the role of local Soviets in local government and occasionally invited non-Party members to Party Congresses. It is not clear whether these initiatives reflect a genuine commitment to greater democracy within the Party, or a populist attempt to outflank the Party apparatus by mobilizing support at lower levels.

Whatever Khrushchev's intentions, it was unlikely that there would be a return to the type of dictatorial power wielded by Stalin. Stalin acquired his power in a period of extreme crisis, when Party members knew they faced daunting internal and external threats. Now the atmosphere was utterly different. The Soviet Union was a superpower; it had survived World War II; it had a powerful industrial and military establishment; it led a regional defense alliance (the Warsaw Pact), founded in 1955; its scientists had developed an atom bomb by 1949, and an H-bomb by 1953. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the world's first artificial satellite, proving that it had the missile technology needed to deliver nuclear weapons. These successes raised the prestige of Soviet science, and created optimism in the USSR (and pessimism in the USA) that the socialist system would soon overtake the capitalist system of the USA industrially, technologically, and militarily.

In this more confident atmosphere, Party leaders no longer felt obliged to tolerate autocratic or erratic leadership. Like eighteenth-century Russian Guards regiments, they were willing to risk the occasional coup in the interests of more stable leadership. On October 13, 1964, while Khrushchev was on holiday on the Black Sea coast, the Presidium removed him from office. Khrushchev accepted the inevitable with little protest, and even took some pride in the manner of his removal. His son, Sergei, reported him as saying,

I'm already old and tired ... I've accomplished the most important things. The relations between us, the style of leadership has changed fundamentally. Could anyone have ever dreamed of telling Stalin that he no longer pleased us and should retire? He would have made mince-meat of us. Now everything is different. Fear has disappeared, and a dialogue is carried on among equals. That is my service. I won't fight any longer.<sup>11</sup>

As in eighteenth-century Russia, a more confident leadership offered stability for its elites. Leonid Brezhnev's watchword, "stability of cadres," captured with precision the new mood of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Brezhnev would rise along a similar path to Khrushchev until he, too, became undisputed leader and the focus of a new leadership cult. But his power always rested on the Party apparatus and he ruled as a consensus politician. No longer could the Soviet system generate the extreme elite discipline of the 1930s. And that helps explain why it would never again be able to generate the extreme mobilizational pressure that had powered industrialization and victory in the Great Patriotic War.

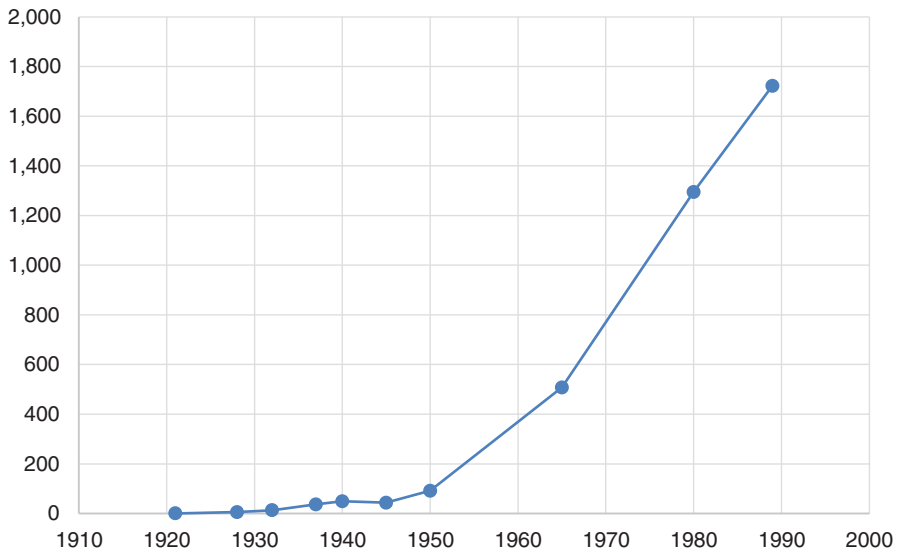
## CHANGING ATTITUDES AND LIFEWAYS

In the 1950s, Soviet citizens finally began to benefit from the sacrifices of the Stalin era. The ad hoc concessions of the early 1950s were replaced by more systematic concessions that became part of an informal "social contract" between government and people.

The Virgin Lands program set the tone. It was a vast mobilizational effort intended to improve food supplies and living standards. For a year or two it looked like a success. For the first time, Soviet grain harvests rose above the level of 1913: from 82.5 million tons in 1953, to 134.7 million tons in 1958. However, under intense pressure to raise output local officials cut corners and ignored warnings by agronomists about the fragility of steppe soils. By the early 1960s production was declining in almost half of the Virgin Lands. To fulfill its end of the new social contract, the government reacted not by demanding new sacrifices, but by buying food abroad, at the cost of precious reserves of foreign currency. Sixty years earlier, the Tsarist Empire had been a major grain exporter. From 1964, the Soviet Union became a major importer of grain.

Though this was a worrying sign, for most Soviet citizens life got better. Under Khrushchev, wages rose, school tuition fees (reintroduced under Stalin) were abolished, new consumer goods appeared, such as fridges and washing machines, the working day was shortened, and pensions and holiday entitlements increased. Khrushchev also invested in housing, a task Stalin had ignored. In 1957, Khrushchev launched a vast program to build cheap apartment buildings. Though unattractive (they were often described as *Khrushchoby*, a pun combining Khrushchev with the word *ushchoby*, or "slums"), the new apartments improved living conditions for millions, and reduced the number of people sharing kitchens and toilets in communal apartments, or *kommunalki*. These had been a major cause of domestic conflict, as families fought petty guerrilla wars in their corridors, kitchens, bathrooms, and bedrooms.

Rough estimates of Soviet consumption levels suggest that by 1950 they had reached about 110 percent of the 1928 level and by 1958 they had reached 185 percent.<sup>12</sup> Living standards rose in both the towns and the countryside, making good the promise of a better life for working people after a generation of sacrifice. Improving living standards lent plausibility to Khrushchev's boast that the Soviet Union would catch up with and overtake the capitalist world.



**Figure 16.4** Soviet electricity generation, 1921–1989 (milliard kWh). Based on Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 437. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

One measure of the change is the generation of electricity. Lenin had famously said that “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country,” but it was not until the 1950s that electricity generation really took off, benefiting both consumers and industry (Figure 16.4).

However, policies intended to improve living standards committed the government not just to improvements but to *sustained* improvements, as expectations rose. Over the next two decades, maintaining that consumerist bargain would prove increasingly difficult as growth rates slowed, forcing the government to pay for improved living standards from existing resources rather than from gains in efficiency. Oil and natural gas or taxes on alcohol consumption helped pay for foreign grain that was used to feed livestock to maintain supplies of meat in the towns. Subsidies rose on food and consumer goods, on rents, electricity, and transportation, hiding real costs, distorting prices, and weighing down the budget. One measure of the extent of these subsidies was the rise in prices at collective farm markets, where peasants sold produce from their private plots at market prices.

In the long run, such methods were not sustainable. Between 1966 and 1970, per capita consumption of all goods and services rose at 5.1 percent per annum; by the early 1970s the rate had fallen to 2.9 percent, and by 1981 to 1.8 percent.<sup>13</sup> By the early 1980s, even supplies of basic foodstuffs were unreliable, and rationing was introduced in some regions. Though the gap in living standards between the USA and the USSR had narrowed in the 1950s and 1960s, it began to widen again in the 1970s. In 1980, Soviet GDP per head was just under 50 percent that of the USA, only a slight improvement on the relative figure (40 percent) for 1938.<sup>14</sup>

While it kept prices low, the government could not supply enough high-quality goods. Consumers lived in a seller's market, characterized by chronic shortages, poor service, and lengthening queues, because the Soviet Union's 50,000 odd enterprises and 50,000 odd state farms and collective farms catered to planners, not to consumers. Where supplies were limited and unpredictable, consumers had to use informal methods to get goods, creating large semi-official quasi-markets or networks of barter. To buy goods such as cars, consumers exploited influential contacts, or paid bribes, or haggled with officials. All lived with the frustration and tedium of standing in endless queues. Indeed, queuing became a sort of informal tax on people's time. It could absorb hours each day, particularly for women, who did most of the shopping in a world where peasant ideas of gender roles still persisted. The stresses of living in a seller's market affected everyone, but none more so than single mothers. Though the Soviet system prided itself on the provision of childcare, the quality of care was poor.

In the 1970s, evidence began to accumulate of a growing health crisis. At first, industrialization and urbanization had raised levels of health care, reduced infant mortality, and increased life expectancy. Between 1950 and 1971, deaths during the first year of life had fallen from 80.7 for every thousand babies to 22.9. By 1987, they had risen again to 25.4 deaths per 1,000. While life expectancies were rising almost everywhere else in the world, life expectancy for Soviet males fell from 66.1 years to 62.3 years between 1960 and 1980, as a result of alcoholism, poor diets, and polluted urban environments.<sup>15</sup> Health deteriorated because health services were underfunded, women were forced to use abortion as a form of contraception, pollution levels were high in the towns, and people drank more alcohol. Heavy drinking topped up the state budget, but also increased the number of industrial and traffic accidents and the level of domestic violence. The government made only tokenistic efforts to reduce alcoholism, because alcohol taxes generated such huge revenues. By 1984, alcoholic drinks accounted for about 12 percent of government revenue, because 90 percent of the cost of alcohol went into turnover taxes.<sup>16</sup>

Slowing growth threatened the social contract of the 1950s. But it also threatened the Soviet Union's other major goal: maintaining a defense establishment adequate for a modern global superpower. Waste and inefficiency meant that it cost more for the Soviet Union to maintain a modern defense establishment than for the USA, whose economy was about twice as large. Roughly speaking, this meant that the Soviet Union had to devote twice as large a share of output to defense as the USA, and that does not include the increasing costs of maintaining and policing the Soviet Union's eastern European empire. At huge cost, the Soviet Union did maintain a credible nuclear and conventional defense force in the 1960s and 1970s, and something like military parity with the USA. But by the 1980s, it was clearly falling behind. Soviet planners were slow to introduce computer technology, so that, while US weapons became smarter, the Soviet Union continued to rely on the number and explosive power of cruder weapons. These technological differences provide an apt symbol of the difference between a command economy that focused on mobilization and

a market economy that focused more on innovation and the efficient use of resources.

As growth slowed, society changed, and so did popular attitudes. In 1928 about one fifth of the population lived in towns; in 1965 slightly over half; and by 1989 about two thirds of the population lived in towns. Between 1959 and 1980, the number of cities with more than 100,000 people doubled from 123 to 251.<sup>17</sup> Educational standards also rose. As late as 1959, 91 percent of urban workers and 98 percent of rural workers had no secondary education; by 1984, just 19 percent of manual workers lacked secondary education.<sup>18</sup> The peasant society of the 1920s was now a society of well-educated urbanites, with new expectations and a more critical attitude to politics and ideology.

As important as social changes was a growing *awareness* of change. Though the government jammed overseas broadcasts and censored printed information from the West, knowledge of conditions in the capitalist world seeped in through many channels, including western broadcasts, contacts with western visitors and students, and hurried official trips abroad. The sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaja described the impact of her first trip abroad in 1957, to Sweden.

It made a very great impression indeed on me; before me was another, a different way of life, people with different values, needs, opinions, and different ways of organizing the economy and solving social problems. This experience not only broadened my mental outlook, it threw additional light on our own domestic problems. My own personal impressions shattered the idea I had been given that the life of working people in the West consisted mainly of suffering. We saw that, in fact, the countries of the West had in many instances overtaken us and we had lively discussions about ways of overcoming our own weaknesses.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1930s, a crude, Sunday School Marxism and the heroic slogans of Soviet propaganda could impress illiterate peasants disorientated by the upheavals of the first Five-Year Plans. They no longer impressed well-educated city dwellers in the 1970s, or students forced to take university courses in *Diamat* (or “dialectical materialism”). The social historian Boris Mironov describes how, as an exemplary undergraduate student at Leningrad University, he began to criticize Marxist dogma in three essays he wrote in 1961.

In the first, I demonstrated that under capitalism no impoverishment of workers had occurred ...; in the second, I argued that capitalist profits were derived from the exploitation of natural resources and not that of workers; and in the third, I put forward the theses that in the USSR public property actually belonged not to the people, as socialism dictated, but to the *nomenklatura* and that Soviet workers were exploited as ruthlessly as anywhere.<sup>20</sup>

As in the nineteenth century, the most alienated were those on the fringes of the Soviet elite, with lots of education but few privileges.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Soviet intellectuals lived through a cultural thaw, while Khrushchev’s secret speech (it was not secret for long) set a powerful precedent for criticism of the system. In 1962, Khrushchev allowed the journal *Novyi Mir* to publish Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s novella about life in the labor camps, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. But Khrushchev’s

successors checked the thaw. In 1967, a military historian, A. M. Nekrich, who published a work criticizing Soviet lack of preparation for World War II, was dismissed from his position and attacked publicly for his criticisms of Stalin. The KGB began to clamp down on dissidents, who resorted to unofficial ways of publishing their writings. Some published abroad, while others borrowed the technology of chain letters, inviting readers to type out what they had read and pass it on in what came to be known as *samizdat* or “self-publication.”

In 1967, Yu. V. Andropov (1911–1984) became head of the KGB. Over the next 15 years he conducted a subtle and highly successful campaign against dissidents, using methods slightly less heavy-handed than Stalin’s. He expelled influential writers such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, but incarcerated other dissidents in camps or internal exile or in psychiatric hospitals. But as the KGB tried to drive dissident ideas underground, the same ideas began to spread within the Soviet ruling elite and even within the *nomenklatura*. By the 1980s, there was widespread and profound cynicism about Soviet achievements, goals, and methods of rule. Support for the system was being hollowed out from within. This is the main reason why the system collapsed so rapidly once the political elite itself gave up on it.

## THE PROBLEM OF EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

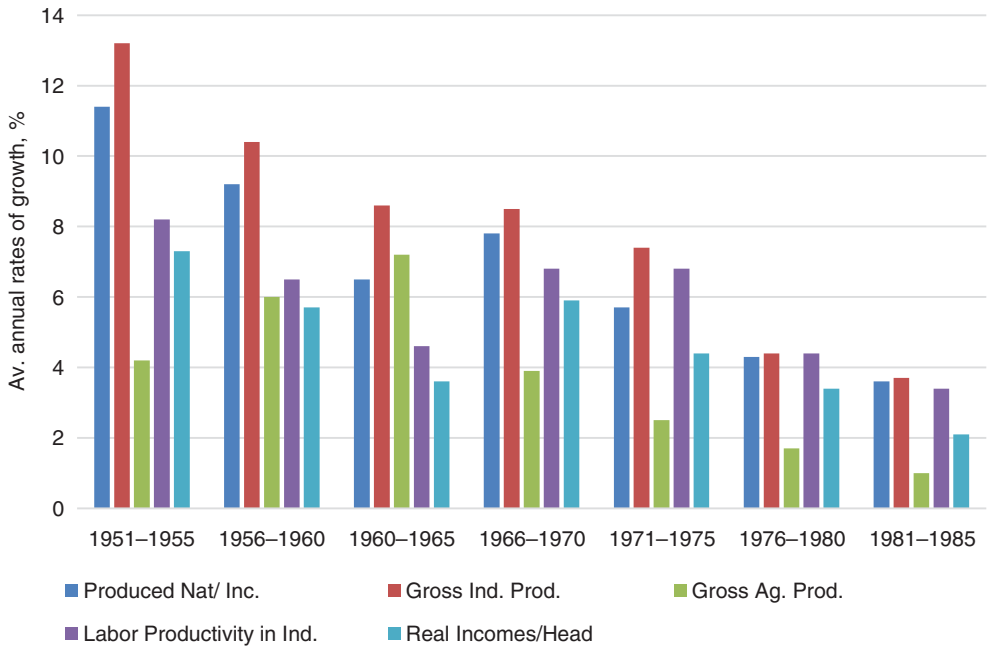
The system’s primary failing was mobilizational. The elite began to lose faith in the system because it could no longer generate enough resources to satisfy consumers and maintain military parity with the USA. Soviet growth rates looked impressive in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Then growth slowed. Particularly worrying was the fear that official output figures flattered Soviet economic performance. Some calculations suggest that growth rates were actually falling by the 1980s. (See Table 16.1 and Figure 16.5.)

What had gone wrong? At the deepest level, the system’s problems arose from over-reliance on direct mobilization. The system built under Stalin was good at mobilizing resources, but not very good at using them economically so as to maximize the value they yielded. In a world where output was growing fast

**Table 16.1** The slowdown: Soviet economic growth, 1951–1985 (average annual rates of growth, official data, %)

	Produced national income	Gross industrial production	Gross agricultural production	Labor productivity in industry	Real incomes per head
1951–1955	11.4	13.2	4.2	8.2	7.3
1956–1960	9.2	10.4	6.0	6.5	5.7
1961–1965	6.5	8.6	7.2	4.6	3.6
1966–1970	7.8	8.5	3.9	6.8	5.9
1971–1975	5.7	7.4	2.5	6.8	4.4
1976–1980	4.3	4.4	1.7	4.4	3.4
1981–1985	3.6	3.7	1.0	3.4	2.1

Source: Table and graph based on White, *Gorbachev in Power*, 85; figures from *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR 1922–1972 gg.* (Moscow, 1972), 56; and *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR za 70 let* (Moscow, 1987), 58–59.



**Figure 16.5** Average annual rates of growth, USSR, 1951–1985, based on Table 16.1.

in the rest of the world, the Soviet Union was bound to run out of resources if it continued to use them so extravagantly. But that is what it did, turning, one by one, to a series of new resource bonanzas. Furs and grain had been major sources of resource wealth in Tsarist Russia. Stalin had tapped vast reserves of “spare” labor, but those reserves had now been used up, post-Stalin governments were unwilling to mobilize labor using extreme coercion, population growth was slowing in the Slavic heartland, and so was rural migration to the towns. What other forms of resource wealth were there?

In the post-war era, fossil fuels offered a new bonanza.<sup>22</sup> In 1940, Azerbaijan still produced about 87 percent of Soviet oil, but in the 1950s the Soviet Union discovered vast new reserves of oil and natural gas in western Siberia. In the 1960s, new oil fields were found in western Kazakhstan and in Tiumen’ in western Siberia, and in 1968 oil overtook coal as the primary source of Soviet energy.<sup>23</sup> By 1970, new fields were producing over 70 percent of Soviet oil. The Soviet Union started exporting oil again in the 1950s and by 1960 it was the world’s second largest producer of oil after the USA. As in the 1920s, the “soft budget constraints” of the Soviet Union’s non-capitalist economy allowed it to undercut capitalist producers; it sometimes sold oil at half the price of Middle East oil.<sup>24</sup>

The Soviet Union also began to produce natural gas on a large scale.<sup>25</sup> Natural gas was discovered, first, as a by-product of the search for oil. It was used for street lighting in major cities of Tsarist Russia, but Soviet planners were slow to realize that it could produce energy more cheaply than coal or oil. In 1965,

natural gas contributed just 2.4 percent of Soviet energy supplies, less than the contribution of wood and peat.<sup>26</sup> But from the late 1950s, large gas fields were discovered in the Krasnodar region, Ukraine, and Central Asia, and above all in western Siberia. More than 230 new gas fields were discovered during the Seven-Year Plan (1959–1965). In 1965 the government established a separate Ministry of the Gas Industry of the USSR (which would eventually morph into today's Gazprom). By 1970 natural gas was supplying a fifth of Soviet energy requirements.<sup>27</sup> From the mid-1970s massive gas fields were developed in the Tiumen' region, which today accounts for 90 percent of natural gas production in the Russian Federation.<sup>28</sup> The Soviet Union also built a large network of wide-diameter pipelines.

Fossil fuels, most from beyond the Soviet heartland, generated huge resource rents and plenty of foreign currency as international prices rose in the 1970s, after the 1973 oil crisis and the OPEC embargo on excess production. International prices for oil rose from below \$20 a barrel to more than \$40, and after the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, they would reach \$70 a barrel, almost four times the price just 10 years earlier.<sup>29</sup> In 1970, the Soviet Union had received \$0.87 billion from oil exports; by 1980 it was receiving \$12.97 billion, or 15 times as much.<sup>30</sup> A recent calculation suggests that by 1980 the resource rents earned by the Russian Federation alone rose from almost nothing to about \$250 billion a year for oil and almost \$400 billion a year for gas.<sup>31</sup>

The bonanza from oil and gas hid the government's economic problems, while the "soft budget constraints" that allowed the Soviet government to sell energy abroad at fire-sale prices ensured that it would use these vast resources wastefully. Abundant gas and oil also tied the fate of the Soviet Union to global energy prices, and some began to talk of a Soviet "resource curse."<sup>32</sup> As the Netherlands found after the discovery of the Groningen gas field, a resource bonanza could have curious economic effects because, while resource prices are high, a country's real exchange rates may rise, encouraging imports and discouraging the manufacture and export of non-resource goods. This complex of issues came to be known as the "Dutch" disease. If resource rents were to start falling, would the Soviet Union still be able to maintain its consumerist bargain with the population, as well as its vast defense establishment?

For a time, the resource bonanza hid these problems. In 1987, Gorbachev argued that most apparent growth since the mid-1960s had come from two main sources: the sale of oil abroad and vodka at home.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, the Soviet Union had to reduce its dependence on resources by improving efficiency and raising productivity. This was the fundamental challenge, and most Soviet economists understood the problem. Even in the Stalin era, some understood how dangerous it was to rely for too long on direct mobilization of resources. In the 1950s, after almost two decades of insisting that Soviet society had freed itself from the constraints of traditional economic laws, the government allowed economists to return to such problems. However, they did so within paradigms shaped by Marxism, which limited the solutions they could consider.



Most economists understood that raising efficiency meant finding ways of incorporating market forces within the command economy. Some looked to the NEP for a model of a society that combined planning and market forces.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the NEP period seemed to demonstrate the instability of any system that tried to combine planning and markets. While planning stifled entrepreneurial initiative, markets seemed to undermine planning. So how could market forces be incorporated within an economy profoundly biased towards direct mobilization?

One possibility was to set planning targets that rewarded productivity-raising innovations. But despite years of experimentation, it proved almost impossible to do this within the structures of the planned economy. It was not even clear how to measure productivity in a system whose prices were determined by planners rather than by supply and demand. Marx's "labor theory of value" also distorted prices by encouraging planners to overvalue labor, to undervalue resources, from water to oil and gas, and to ignore problems of scarcity. Planners understood that the statistical information they were using was artificial and distorted, and some preferred to use CIA estimates of Soviet productive capacity. Price distortions could have huge consequences, as in Central Asia's cotton economy, where water was treated as a free good, creating an ecological catastrophe as over-irrigation drained the region's major rivers.

Rewarding innovation was also tricky. Since the early 1930s, the main task of enterprises had been to get the job done, to fulfill the plan. And not to over fulfill the plan, because that would just ensure that next year the planners would raise targets. But whatever happened, no manager wanted to innovate at the risk of missing planned targets. After all, innovations were expensive and disruptive, and could take years of fixing and tweaking. In such an environment, managers feared innovating unless the government assumed all the risks, and that deprived managers of any incentive to innovate efficiently. Brezhnev once remarked that Soviet managers and planners shied away from innovations, "as the devil shies away from incense."<sup>35</sup>

It was equally hard to know how to discipline inefficient enterprises, even if they could be identified. Some, such as power stations, were so vital that the government could not afford to let them close, however inefficiently they were managed. If the state did close an enterprise, it would then have to create a new enterprise to take its place, with no guarantees that the new enterprise would perform better. Disciplining workers was equally difficult where labor was in short supply. Most managers regularly hired more workers than they needed to make sure they could meet unexpected crises and deadlines.

Could tighter, better-informed planning solve the problem, perhaps with the aid of computers? Far too often, the central planners simply got their sums wrong, ordering the production of shoes of the wrong size or type, or designing clothes that no one wanted whatever the price. Part of the problem was that enterprises had to please planners, rather than the consumers who actually bought their products. Naturally, quality suffered. The Soviet Union produced more than twice as much footwear as the USA, but its quality was so poor that many didn't sell, and the Soviet Union had to import shoes; it produced more steel than the USA, but fewer useable finished products.<sup>36</sup> Enterprises

didn't care as long as they met their plan targets, and it was almost impossible to devise plans that measured quality rather than quantity. In any case, calculating the precise flows of resources needed to run an economy of over 200 million people, and more than 200,000 industrial enterprises, turned out to be a problem beyond even the theoretical capacity of computers. Markets really were better at providing economic information than planners.<sup>37</sup> Besides, the government's attempts to limit the flow of potentially subversive information ensured that computerization would be a slow and painful process. Even photocopiers had to be registered with the police in case they were used to copy the wrong sort of information, such as the writings of dissident authors.

Soviet economists kept returning to the mechanisms that encouraged productivity in market economies. But introducing the market driver meant reducing rather than increasing the mobilizational power of the center, and creating legal and economic space for risk-taking and innovation by individual entrepreneurs. This is why most reform plans of the post-Stalin era depended on some form of decentralization. In 1957, Khrushchev devolved authority for many planning decisions to regional *sovmarkhozy* ("Regional Economic Councils"). The idea was that regional planners would use local resources more efficiently, but the real effect was to break inter-regional supply chains and encourage regional hoarding. The experiment was abandoned in 1965, after Khrushchev's removal.

Aleksei Kosygin presided over reforms introduced in 1963 that placed selected enterprises on a *khozrashchet*, or "economic calculation" basis. Such methods had been tried in the NEP period. They judged enterprises less by raw output targets than by profits, in other words, by the efficiency with which they met their targets. Managers were given greater control over contracts and supplies, which, in theory, allowed them to shop around for better deals. But where most enterprises lacked such flexibility, shopping around for cheaper supplies was extremely difficult, and promised few rewards. In 1969, wholesale markets accounted for only around 0.3 percent of national income.<sup>38</sup>

Events in eastern Europe in the late 1960s showed that decentralizing reforms could be politically dangerous. The reforms of the Czech "Prague Spring" in 1968 began with measures similar to those introduced by Kosygin. The logic of economic reform encouraged Alexander Dubcek (1921–1992), the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, to allow the formation of independent trade unions and eventually of non-communist parties. In August 1968, after Dubcek began to talk of leaving the Warsaw Pact, Soviet leaders sent in 250,000 Warsaw Pact troops to prevent Czechoslovakia from drifting into the capitalist orbit.

Under an ageing leadership, scarred by war, time, and Stalinism, there was no longer much enthusiasm for tackling these thorny issues by the late 1970s. Living off the fat of a resource bonanza was so much easier. By 1980, the average age of Politburo members was 70, that of the Secretariat was 67, while that of the Council of Ministers was 65.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Brezhnev's policy of "stability of cadres" allowed a sometimes frustrated younger generation of regional bosses and industrial managers to entrench their power and authority at lower levels of government. This was particularly true in the republics, where a series

of leaders, all from the titular nationalities of their republics, held power for much of the period after the fall of Khrushchev. In Azerbaijan, Heidar Aliev was head of the republican Party from 1969 to 1982; in Belorussia, Petr Masherov from 1965 to 1980; in Georgia, Vasili Mahavanadze and then Eduard Shevardnadze from 1953 to 1985; in Kazakhstan, Dinmukhamed Kunaev from 1960 to 1986 (with a brief spell out of office); in Kyrgyzstan, Turdakun Usubaliev from 1961 to 1985; in Tajikistan, Jabar Rasulov from 1961 to 1982; in Turkmenistan, Mukhamednazar Gapurov from 1969 to 1985; in Uzbekistan, Sharaf Rashidov from 1959 to 1983; in Ukraine, Petr Shelest and then Vladimir Shcherbitsky from 1963 to 1989.<sup>40</sup> None of these leaders had much enthusiasm for decentralizing reforms that would threaten the networks of power and privileges they had built up while in office.

### *PERESTROIKA AND COLLAPSE: 1985–1991*

By the mid-1980s, economic growth and globalization were eroding the economic and cultural barriers of the Cold War, while a booming global capitalism was raising the bar for economic, technological, and military success. Productivity rose around the world, and so did living standards for a growing global middle class. The planned economies of the socialist world struggled in a world where success meant not just effective mobilization, but also innovation and growth.

In the Soviet Union, generational turnover at the top released a torrent of reforms after 1985, and just six years later, in 1991, the system collapsed. The collapse was not inevitable, though without major reforms, continued decline was predictable. The system might have struggled on through decades of increasing senescence, like North Korea or Cuba, just as the Mongol Empire might have survived for a few more decades had Khan Mongke lived longer.<sup>41</sup> But in both the major planned economies of the Soviet Union and China, new leaders decided that pre-emptive reforms were necessary to avoid collapse. The question was: how to reform the system? Leaders in these two former empires took very different approaches to the task, with very different outcomes.

### 1985–1990: LAUNCHING REFORM

As in 1260 and February 1917, transformation began at the top. In both China (after the death of Mao in 1976) and the Soviet Union (after the death of Konstantin Chernenko [1911–1985] in 1985), a new generation of officials and politicians came to power, with the energy and imagination needed to undertake fundamental reforms. All agreed that market mechanisms of some kind had to be incorporated within the planned economy. The tight grip of the center was stifling initiative, creativity, and innovation.

In the West, neoliberal economists saw the reforms of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as examples of how to increase economic efficiency by reducing the role of the state and increasing the role of market forces. The key, according to the “Washington consensus,” was deregulation, reducing the

grip of the state and unleashing the creativity of competitive markets. In the socialist world, they argued, governments should move fast to deregulate prices and privatize resources and businesses. Then they should step out of the way. Though such reforms might hurt consumers by removing subsidies on consumer goods, speed was necessary to circumvent opposition and unleash the full power of market forces.

But this was not the only possible model for reform. The East Asian tigers, such as South Korea and Singapore, had built vibrant market economies under strong states that actively managed economic development. This was also the path that China would take after Deng Xiaoping became paramount leader in 1978. Deng introduced cautious market reforms in particular regions, often with foreign help, advice, and finance, and the support of the Chinese diaspora.

In the Soviet Union, economic pressures mounted in the early 1980s. In the middle of a prolonged and costly war in Afghanistan launched in 1979, the price of oil and gas began to fall, slashing resource rents. Those generated just within the Russian Federation fell from over \$250 billion a year for oil and \$400 billion for gas in 1980 to less than \$100 billion a year for oil and less than \$200 billion for gas in 1990.<sup>42</sup> At least one expert has argued that this change alone was

fatal for the Soviet economic and political system. The lack of alternative sources of revenues in the country led not only to the freezing of many investment projects and a drop in the population's living standards, but also to a complete destruction of the economic mechanism on which the Soviet system had rested over the previous two decades.<sup>43</sup>

Coincidentally, oil production in western Siberia and oil exports began to decline from the mid-1980s, because the most accessible oil fields were producing less, and the government had balked at the investment needed to find and exploit oil fields in more remote regions.<sup>44</sup>

These pressures help explain why, when the older generation of leaders left, between 1982 and 1985, reform came swiftly onto the agenda. Brezhnev died on November 10, 1982. He was succeeded as General Secretary by the former head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. Despite his previous role, Andropov was widely regarded as an economic reformer. He had been impressed by the socialist market reforms he had seen as ambassador to Hungary before 1956. And as head of the KGB he understood better than his colleagues the cynicism and disillusionment of many Soviet citizens. He launched tentative reforms using both economic lures and political pressure. He attacked high-level corruption and tried to tighten work discipline. But he also tried to encourage the economic initiative of enterprise managers by increasing their control over budgets and bonuses.

However, similar reforms had not succeeded in the past. In any case, Andropov was unwell when he took office, and lacked the time and energy to introduce a sustained program of reforms. He vanished from public view in August 1983 and died on February 9, 1984.<sup>45</sup> Though Andropov had hoped to be succeeded by his friend, the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev, his colleagues

elected Konstantin Chernenko, the last leading member of the Brezhnev generation. Chernenko was already 72 and in poor health, so few were surprised when he, too, vanished from public view in December 1984. His death, on March 10, 1985, broke the log-jam. Gorbachev was elected as the new leader with the support of the long-term foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko.

Mikhail Gorbachev (1931–) represented a new generation of leaders, born in the Stalinist era but shaped by destalinization. Gorbachev claimed that many of his generation saw themselves as “children of the Twentieth Congress”; their “obligation” was to continue the reforms begun by Khrushchev.<sup>46</sup> They had the commitment, the knowledge, the incentive, and now the power to launch serious reforms. For Soviet citizens, it was a relief to see a younger, more vigorous, and better-educated cohort of leaders. Wags asked, “What support does Gorbachev have in the Kremlin?” Their answer: “None – he walks unaided.”<sup>47</sup>

There was a rapid changing of the guard. Of 14 members of the Politburo in 1981, only 4 remained in 1986. Within a year of Gorbachev’s accession, 70 percent of ministers were new. By 1989 all republican First Secretaries had been replaced, and most lower-level Party officials.<sup>48</sup>

Most of the new leaders understood the need for reform, though there was little agreement about details or strategies. Gorbachev gave his diagnosis in his 1987 book, *Perestroika*. Soviet economic growth had been slowing for at least 15 years and the Soviet Union was falling behind in efficiency, technology, and productivity. But over-abundant resources had allowed governments to postpone reform.

Our country’s wealth in terms of natural and manpower resources has spoilt, one may even say corrupted us. That, in fact, is chiefly the reason why it was possible for our economy to develop extensively for decades. Accustomed to giving priority to quantitative growth in production, we tried to check the falling rates of growth, but did so mainly by continually increasing expenditures: we built up the fuel and energy industries and increased the use of natural resources in production.<sup>49</sup>

The challenge was to move from extensive growth based on mobilization of more resources to intensive growth based on more efficient use of resources. It was vital to make more effective use of the “human factor,” the creativity, initiative, and energy of the Soviet people, by reducing government supervision and increasing the rewards for innovative work. It was also vital to relax the government’s grip on information so as to create a better informed populace. Abroad, he argued for a less confrontational foreign policy that would allow a reduction of the military budget. “Acceleration,” “new thinking” on foreign policy, and increased openness or *glasnost*’ became the watchwords of the new era of *perestroika* or “rebuilding.”

These reforms smacked of the Washington consensus, so it is no surprise that Soviet reforms would diverge sharply from the reforms that had begun in China. China’s leaders resisted democratic political reforms, yet managed to integrate the market driver within a strong and apparently stable state structure, and generate remarkable rates of economic growth. Such a strategy

worked in China partly because China still had large reserves of rural labor to drive rapid industrialization. Furthermore, capitalism had not been eradicated as completely as in the Soviet Union. In China, capitalism vanished for just a generation and memories of a market economy were still alive even in rural areas. In the early 1980s, when Chinese governments allowed individual households to farm separately, everyone remembered who had farmed which plots; many began to farm their former plots enthusiastically and sell their surplus produce.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, three generations of Soviet citizens had lived without capitalism. That was long enough to efface all memory of the skills, the networks of credit and supply, and the habits of thought needed in a market economy. They knew nothing of buying and selling, of careful budgeting, or of entrepreneurial risk.<sup>51</sup> When Gorbachev was in charge of Soviet agriculture, he told a Hungarian reformer that, “Unfortunately, in the course of the last fifty years the Russian peasant has had all the independence knocked out of him.”<sup>52</sup>

Yet Soviet leaders also proved less willing and able than their Chinese counterparts to learn from the capitalist world. In any case, the Russian capitalist diaspora, which might have helped with reform, was smaller and generally less entrepreneurial than the vast Chinese diaspora. Under Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), the Chinese government sought out the expertise and advice of Chinese capitalists abroad, beginning with Hong Kong. Deng Xiaoping also dipped his toes more cautiously into market waters, trying out reforms in special regions rather than across the entire economy. His approach was experimental and pragmatic. As early as 1961, he had famously remarked that it didn’t matter what color a cat was as long as it caught mice. In contrast, early Soviet reforms were based on the ideas of Soviet economic theorists with a limited understanding of competitive markets, and they were launched across the entire Soviet Union.

Finally, in the Soviet Union middle-level managers and officials had entrenched their power during the Brezhnev era, and managed to resist many initiatives from the center. In contrast, the Chinese government had retained immense authority over the regions, because the instability of the Cultural Revolution had prevented the consolidation of regional networks of officials and managers.

Like Andropov, Gorbachev’s first reflex was to reach for the traditional levers of power. He tried to enforce work discipline and, with the support of Egor Ligachev, to reduce alcoholism. Like Tsar Nicholas II’s disastrous experiment with prohibition at the beginning of World War I, the ill-prepared anti-alcohol reforms were a fiscal disaster.<sup>53</sup> After several years of declining oil revenues, the sudden drop in revenues from vodka sales doubled the budgetary deficit from 3 percent of GDP to 6 percent in 1986. Anders Aslund argues that, “Perhaps more than any other single measure, the anti-alcohol campaign hastened the economic collapse of the Soviet Union.”<sup>54</sup> The failure of this well-intentioned reform illustrates the government’s unfamiliarity with capitalist accounting, and its continued reliance on “soft budget constraints.” Such commercial ignorance and fiscal indiscipline would eventually lead to hyperinflation and near bankruptcy.

More successful was Gorbachev's program of "new thinking" in foreign policy. Estimates of Soviet defense expenditure ranged from 17–25 percent of GDP in the mid-1980s. In an interview with *Time Magazine* in September 1985, Gorbachev noted, "We would prefer to use every ruble that today goes for defense to meet civilian, peaceful needs."<sup>55</sup> Early in 1986, he announced plans to abolish nuclear weapons. In November 1985, he held the first of several summits with President Reagan, and in 1989 the Soviet army withdrew from its disastrous attempt to prop up a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. So determined was Gorbachev to reduce defense expenditure that his government made no effort to protect its eastern European allies when their governments began to topple at the end of 1989.

Serious economic reform began in 1986. At the twenty-seventh Party Congress, Gorbachev described economic reform as "the key to all our problems, immediate and long-term, economic and social, political and ideological, domestic and foreign."<sup>56</sup> Like many Soviet economists, Gorbachev took the NEP era as the model for a socialist market economy. No one in the leadership had real memories of the era, unlike Deng Xiaoping, who had been a student in Moscow in 1926. So it was easy to forget how unstable it was, how government policy had lurched between qualified support for market forces and attempts to crush an emerging bourgeoisie of *kulaks* and *Nepmen*.

In November 1986, individuals and families were allowed to set up small businesses undertaking work such as taxi driving or car repairs. From January 1, 1987, for the first time since 1921, the government let some Soviet enterprises trade abroad independently rather than through the Ministry of Foreign Trade. By 1989, most Soviet enterprises could trade abroad on their own initiative. In May 1988, the government allowed the creation of cooperative enterprises, and within two years, cooperatives employed 2.4 percent of the workforce and accounted for 3 percent of Soviet GNP.<sup>57</sup> A 1988 law allowed rural households to take out long leases on plots of land, and even to pass them on to their children. In principle, at least, this change allowed a slow breakup of collective farms and their transformation into small semi-independent farms. If the economic reforms as a whole were reminiscent of the NEP era, the first attempts at agrarian reform harked back to the Stolypin reforms under Nicholas II, though they were launched in a much less promising environment for individual farmers.

A June 1987 law on enterprises took effect early in 1988. Once more, it attempted to stimulate the creativity and initiative of Soviet enterprises and their managers. Enterprises still had to meet planned targets, but were given more leeway in deciding how to do so, and more control over prices and profit levels. Essentially, the reform reduced the number of plan indicators that Soviet managers had to meet, which increased the power and independence of enterprise managers and their control over their enterprises.

The economic reforms were intended to spawn a new entrepreneurial class, operating within and outside of the planning system. The hope was that this new class would compete with existing enterprises and raise average levels of efficiency and productivity. But that is not what happened. Though a new business class did appear, its members usually found it easiest to generate revenues

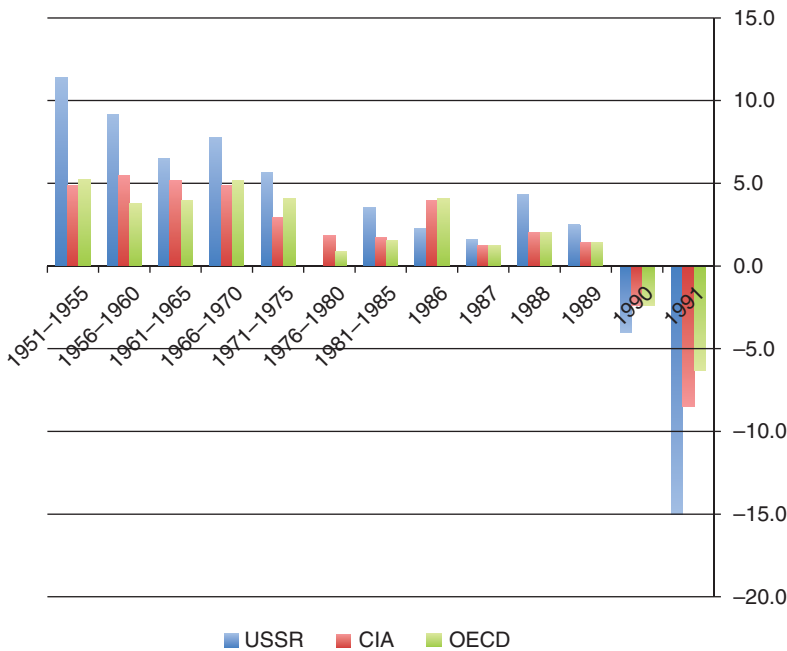
**Table 16.2** Soviet GDP: Various estimates of % rates of growth, 1951–1991

Source	1951–1955	1956–1960	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
USSR	11.4	9.2	6.5	7.8	5.7	4.3	3.6	2.3	1.6	4.4	2.5	-4	-15
CIA	4.9	5.5	4.8	4.9	3	1.9	1.8	4	1.3	2.1	1.5	-2.4	-8.5
OECD	5.3	3.8	4	5.2	4.1	0.9	1.6	4.1	1.3	2.1	1.5	-2.4	-6.3

Source: Data from White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, Table 4.1, 119.

by collaborating with officials or managers operating within the planned economy. Managers and independent entrepreneurs collaborated to tap a new revenue stream that used existing networks of influence and power to turn public assets into private wealth. In short, they continued to act like traditional mobilizers (“rent-seekers” in the economists’ jargon) rather than entrepreneurs. They siphoned public wealth into private pockets, from where it could be moved, if necessary, to foreign bank accounts. By doing so, they began a creeping privatization of Soviet assets that the government had never intended. Meanwhile, the planning system broke down before market forces were developed enough to replace it. Growth rates fell, and by 1990 total output began to decline (Table 16.2 and Figure 16.6).

What went wrong? There is no easy diagnosis, though some of the crucial factors have already been described. Falling oil prices deprived the government



**Figure 16.6** Various estimates of Soviet economic growth rates (%), 1959–1991. Data from White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, Table 4.1, 119.



of the hard currency it needed to pay for imports. By the late 1980s oil prices had fallen from a high of over US\$70 per barrel to the pre-1973 level of \$20, and they would fluctuate around \$15–\$30 a barrel until the end of the 1990s. Egor Gaidar, who managed market reforms in the Russian Federation in the early 1990s, described the fall in oil prices as “the final blow.”<sup>58</sup>

Another problem was that so few of the preconditions existed for a flourishing market economy. There was little understanding of how markets worked, and both officials and consumers treated entrepreneurs with suspicion. Soviet law offered little protection for private property or commercial assets, nor was there a body of commercial law, so it was hard to know what rights entrepreneurs had over assets or what commercial activities were legal or how courts would handle commercial conflicts. There was no commercial banking system to provide cheap loans. And the price system was chaotic; most prices were still set by government bureaucrats, while others (often for the same goods) were set by market forces. Many made huge profits by exploiting these anomalies rather than by producing new wealth.

In any case, the Soviet managerial class, the group with the most experience of managing the Soviet economy, understood mobilization but not markets. They were used to working in monopolistic environments. But the reforms gave them increased power over enterprises, which allowed them to generate pseudo-profits by exploiting the many contradictions between the planned economy and the emerging market economy. Arbitrage was much more promising than innovation. The result was a growth in rent-seeking rather than in productive entrepreneurial activity. The notion of rent-seeking entered modern economic discussion through the work of Anne Krueger. A simple definition is “a search for financial benefits from state help or state protection against competition rather than from improving efficiency.” And, as that definition suggests, rent-seeking is a modern equivalent of the tribute-taking typical of traditional mobilizational systems, including that of Russia, with the (important) difference that it takes place within a modern, capitalist economy.<sup>59</sup>

The reforms failed to create an attractive environment for genuine entrepreneurial activity, but they also made it difficult to keep producing and trading in the old ways. As managers sought new supplies and markets, existing supply chains snapped, and enterprises had to seek new ways of generating revenues. Raising prices was one possibility, but managers learned quickly that in a market environment that reduced demand. Where enterprises lacked cash, they bartered with other enterprises, using the professional fixers or *tolkachi* who had flourished by helping enterprises get around the anomalies of the command economy. I personally heard in 1990 of a company in Minsk whose repair section offered its services to other enterprises in return for subsidized consumer goods such as vodka and sausages. These were distributed to workers in lieu of wages, and workers used the same goods to engage in private barter.

The widening gap between subsidized state prices and free market prices offered spectacular opportunities for arbitrage. Such revenues can rightly be described as “rents” because they did not derive from competitive market

activity and did not raise productivity or increase efficiency, but derived from state protection or other non-market advantages. “The best way to become truly wealthy in 1990 was to purchase oil from a state enterprise at the official price of \$1 a ton and sell it abroad for \$100 a ton and finance the transaction with cheap state credits.”<sup>60</sup> Enterprises soon realized that they could purchase goods at subsidized official prices and resell them at free market prices through tame cooperatives. For example, grain could be imported at subsidized prices and resold at much higher market prices through cooperatives. Finally, cheap state credits allowed the new and largely unregulated cooperative banks to make vast profits by reloading cheap government money on the private market and at commercial rates of interest.<sup>61</sup> As such practices spread, a river of wealth transported Soviet assets into private bank accounts, many of them abroad.<sup>62</sup> Entrepreneurs found that it paid to work with officials who controlled local resources and could issue (or refuse to issue) licenses to trade commercially. Such relations generated corruption on a massive scale.

Genuine entrepreneurial activity was particularly difficult in rural areas. Collective farms discouraged individuals from taking up individual leases, or offered them unsuitable land. Local suppliers of seed, fertilizer, and farm equipment usually had close ties with collective farm chairmen, and little incentive to support independent farmers trying to break through the many administrative and legal barriers they faced. And the government did not always help. In 1990, Egor Ligachev, the Politburo member in charge of agriculture, said in an interview that he would allow decollectivization “over his dead body.”<sup>63</sup> And indeed, collectivization was not abolished. Though collective farmers were allowed to leave and set up independent farms, few choose to do so, and many collective farms survived *perestroika*.

Few pitied struggling entrepreneurs, even in the cities. Used to a price stability that depended on government subsidies, consumers resented the high market prices charged by cooperative restaurants or hairdressers or independent farmers, even if their products and services were of better quality. Government officials found that their own authority could generate incomes by forcing entrepreneurs to pay for administrative services or permits or inspections. Local officials imposed arbitrary taxes and rents on cooperatives, or insisted on onerous safety inspections unless they received bribes. Transporting goods meant running the gauntlet of GAI, the traffic police or “state traffic inspectorate,” which was notorious for fining drivers for imagined violations.<sup>64</sup> The absence of a clear corpus of commercial and property law ensured that most entrepreneurial activities were of uncertain legality, so most businesses had to pay bribes or protection money to officials or racketeers.

As anomalies multiplied, production began to fall and many began to fear the system was breaking down. A 1987 article in *Novyi Mir* titled “You cannot be a little pregnant” argued that there was no half-way house between capitalism and a command economy.<sup>65</sup> In 1987 Vasilii Selyunin and Gregory Khanin published an article in *Novyi Mir* called “Tricky Numbers,” arguing that Soviet statistics had greatly exaggerated Soviet economic achievements, and that real growth had been declining since 1960.<sup>66</sup> Both friends and foes of reform began to understand that reform might end in a collapse of the entire system.<sup>67</sup>

Resistance to economic reform eventually pushed reformers towards political reform, in the hope that popular support for change would help them outflank resistance from their own officials. This was a dangerous gamble, because it assumed broad popular support for economic reforms. But many ordinary citizens were learning that reform might reduce job security and raise prices. After all, most Soviet citizens depended on the Soviet welfare net, with its pensions and its subsidized prices for housing, health, and basic consumer goods. Rising government subsidies had insulated them from the system's economic problems.

In *Perestroika*, Gorbachev described the gamble on political reform with his customary over-confidence.

The weaknesses and inconsistencies of all the known "revolutions from above" are explained precisely by the lack of ... support from below, the absence of concord and concerted action with the masses. ... It is a distinctive feature and strength of *perestroika* that it is simultaneously a revolution "from above" and "from below."<sup>68</sup>

In retrospect, it seems clear that Gorbachev had little understanding of the implications of political liberalization when he promised further *demokratizatsiia* at a Party conference in June 1988.<sup>69</sup> In practice, "democratization" meant surrendering the center's power over the reform process. Deng Xiaoping's son is supposed to have commented to a friend, "My father thinks Gorbachev is an idiot [for reforming the political system before the economic system] ... [H]e won't have the power to fix the economic problems and the people will remove him."<sup>70</sup>

Political reform began with increasing "openness" or *glasnost*. Gorbachev understood *glasnost* as a willingness to make more information available to the population. The Chernobyl disaster showed both the need for and the limits of *glasnost*. On April 26, 1986, a nuclear reactor blew up at Chernobyl, 100 kilometers north of Kiev, during a routine maintenance check. It released more radioactivity than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The government said nothing for two critical days, and even refused to cancel a May Day parade in Kiev, despite winds from the north that exposed everyone present to high radiation levels. Then, in a sharp reversal, it published remarkably frank accounts of what had happened. The awkward combination of secrecy and candor provoked distrust and anger.

The frankness of *glasnost* proved as ideologically corrosive as the ideas in Khrushchev's secret speech. As censorship eased in 1987, the media carried increasingly open discussions of the crimes and victims of the Stalin era, and shockingly detailed critiques of the Soviet system. Banned novels were published; discussions about drug use and prostitution appeared in the press for the first time; and former enemies of the people such as Bukharin and Trotsky were rehabilitated. In 1987, Gorbachev announced that there must be no "blank spots" in Soviet history, and described the "crimes" of the purge era as "wanton repressive measures."<sup>71</sup> By 1990, the Soviet press was remarkably free, and foreign observers noted that the traditional Soviet fear of critical talk seemed to have disappeared, even in conversations with foreigners.

In January 1987, Gorbachev declared that, “A house can be put in order only by a person who feels that he owns this house.”<sup>72</sup> In June 1988, the nineteenth Party conference announced the establishment of a new parliamentary body, the “Congress of People’s Deputies,” one third of whose members would be chosen by popular election. The Congress, in turn, would elect a new two-house Supreme Soviet from among its members. These were radical changes in a system where, for over 50 years, formal elections had masked a form of co-optation through the *nomenklatura*. Genuine elections, with multiple candidates, threatened the security of elites, and the governing role of the Communist Party, and conservatives began to fear for the entire Soviet experiment. In March 1988, a Leningrad teacher, Nina Andreeva, published a widely read critique of the reforms, with the covert help of conservatives in the Party Central Committee.<sup>73</sup>

The Congress of People’s Deputies met in May 1989, and, though most of its members were Party members, many were not. Millions of Soviet viewers watched its robust debates with astonished fascination.

## 1990–1991: THE SYSTEM UNRAVELS

In 1990, the government began to lose control of the reform process. Suddenly, “informal” groups that existed outside the formal governmental structures began to shape Soviet politics. Organizations such as “Memorial,” whose goal was to remember the victims of Stalinism, had emerged as early as 1988. They gained the support of influential dissidents such as the physicist Andrei Sakharov, whom Gorbachev had released from internal exile in 1986. In March 1990, it was agreed to remove article 6 of the 1977 Soviet Constitution, which had guaranteed the political hegemony of the Communist Party. This formally ended the monopoly on power that the Party had enjoyed since 1918.

Economic reform, *glasnost*, and democratization empowered regions and constituencies that had been politically invisible for most of the Soviet era, and ancient fault lines reappeared. These included regional, ethnic, and national divisions. The revival of nationalism came as a shock to politicians such as Gorbachev, who believed the Soviet Union had solved the “national problem.” But they should not have been surprised, as Soviet leaders from the time of Lenin and Stalin had built the idea of nationhood into the structures of the Soviet Union. In the Brezhnev era, the idea of “ethnogenesis” flourished within official ideology, along with increasingly essentialist notions of nationhood, while republican politics was increasingly dominated by local elites, national histories were increasingly taught in schools, and national intelligentsias had emerged with a strong commitment to national cultural traditions.<sup>74</sup>

The ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the Soviet Union began to matter again. For several decades, the Party had successfully co-opted regional elites into a multinational ruling *nomenklatura*, within which elite solidarity normally trumped ethnic allegiance. Indeed, so strong were the ties of the Soviet elite that few republican leaders showed much enthusiasm for independence, whatever their ethnicity. But as the system unraveled regional elites felt increasing pressure to identify with local ethnic and national identities.

In the 1980s, the USSR consisted of 15 republics, within which there were 20 “Autonomous Republics,” 8 “Autonomous Regions,” and 10 “Autonomous Areas.” Officially, the Soviet Union included almost 150 distinct peoples. Great Russians made up about half of the population, though that percentage was falling as Russian growth rates declined and birth rates rose elsewhere, particularly in Central Asia.

At the end of World War II, a new imperial outer layer had been acquired in eastern Europe. Here, nationalist resistance to Soviet control had long been apparent, but since the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Brezhnev doctrine had made it clear that the Soviet government would use force to keep eastern Europe within the Soviet bloc. In December 1988, Gorbachev renounced the Brezhnev doctrine in a speech to the United Nations that shocked conservatives:

For us the necessity of the principle of freedom of choice is clear. Denying that right of peoples, no matter what the pretext for doing so, no matter what words are used to conceal it, means infringing even that unstable balance that it has been possible to achieve. Freedom of choice is a universal principle and there should be no exceptions.<sup>75</sup>

Within a year of that speech, the Soviet Union’s eastern European empire had collapsed. In June 1989, Polish elections produced a government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki that supported the anti-bureaucratic “Solidarity” movement. Mazowiecki was the first non-communist leader of an eastern European state since the 1950s. The Soviet government did not react, which encouraged dissidents in other eastern European states, and in the next few months pro-Soviet governments would fall throughout eastern Europe. In Hungary, the transition was negotiated; in East Germany and Czechoslovakia the communist collapse followed popular but largely peaceful revolts. The opening of the Berlin Wall, on November 9, 1989, had vast symbolic importance throughout the world; within a year, East and West Germany had been reunited. A day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, who had ruled since the 1950s, was overthrown. In Romania, President Ceausescu was overthrown and executed in late December. By the end of 1989, the Soviet Union’s outer empire had collapsed, apparently with the blessing of the Soviet leadership.

The government’s apparent distaste for violent repression encouraged nationalism within the Soviet Union’s inner empire, but here the government took a tougher line. That nationalism was alive and well and increasing in importance even within the Soviet Union became apparent soon after Gorbachev came to power, though he missed the omens. While Brezhnev, the archetypical consensus politician, had normally appointed members of the ruling ethnic group to the leadership of the 15 Soviet republics, in December 1986, Gorbachev appointed a Russian, Gennadi Kolbin, as First Secretary of the Kazakh Republic, in an attempt to weaken local political networks. There were massive riots in Almaty, the Kazakh capital, and they were repressed with considerable bloodshed. In 1989, Kolbin was replaced by

Nursultan Nazarbaev, who still leads Kazakhstan at the time of going to press (2017). In August 1987, 48 years after the Nazi–Soviet pact, under which the Soviet Union had occupied the Baltic region, there were anti-Soviet demonstrations in all the Baltic republics. In 1988, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over Nagorno-Karabakh, a largely Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan.

Democratization accelerated national disintegration. Newly elected republican parliaments soon enjoyed more popular legitimacy than the Soviet parliament. In 1989, the Baltic republics declared their sovereignty within the USSR, and in 1990 the parliaments of Ukraine and Russia followed suit. In May 1990, in Russia, Boris Yeltsin, a leading reformer who had been demoted from the Politburo in November 1987, was elected Chairman of the Russian Republic’s Supreme Soviet. This gave the Russian Federation a distinct national voice for the first time in many decades. In June 1990, Yeltsin resigned from the Communist Party, and a year later, in June 1991, he was elected President of the Russian Republic. This made him the first democratically elected leader in Russian history. In 1990, Latvia declared independence from the Soviet Union. By the end of 1991 the other republics had followed suit. These challenges created uncertainty about where power really lay. There began a “war of laws” between federal and republican authorities, in which republican governments claimed ownership of their own assets, and issued their own laws and decrees, many contradicting those of the Soviet government.

Political instability exacerbated the economic crisis. By 1990 most enterprise managers were ignoring the central plan, though markets had not yet taken its place. Barter spread, the supply system began to break down, and production plummeted. Increasingly radical reform plans proliferated from late 1989. If, earlier, Soviet economists had not listened sufficiently to western economists, now, some felt, they began to listen uncritically to market fundamentalists who advised a sharp, if painful transition to real prices, real privatization, and genuine markets. The Polish shock therapy reforms of January 1990 provided a model. The first serious proposal for non-socialist reform in the Soviet Union was the September 1990 “500 days” reform plan of the economist Stanislav Shatalin. Modeled on Polish “big bang” reforms, it proposed abandoning all price controls, stabilizing the currency by tightening money supply, and rapidly privatizing Soviet assets. It did not mention “socialism.”<sup>76</sup> Resistance from the managerial elite and fear of a popular explosion of discontent explain why Gorbachev refused to allow broad price liberalization (dangerous because it meant inflation, and sharp increases in the prices of consumer goods), or further privatization (which would have meant a radical break with socialist ideology).

Indecision on these critical issues undermined the ruble. To maintain low food prices and keep inefficient factories running, the government spent increasing amounts on subsidies for food, raw materials, and energy. In 1989, subsidies on agricultural products alone represented almost 14 percent of national income.<sup>77</sup> Tax revenues fell as production plummeted and tax evasion soared. Falling revenues forced the government to borrow abroad or print more money. In 1991, the republics stopped passing on revenues to the central government and created their own banks. The Soviet government lost control

of the Soviet monetary system, and by late 1991, the deficit was equal to more than 30 percent of GDP.<sup>78</sup>

As the economy collapsed, and the Union threatened to break up, Gorbachev engaged in increasingly shoddy maneuvers to hold the Union together. He used troops to repress demonstrations in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Latvia. In the middle of 1991, Gorbachev tried to negotiate a new "Union Treaty" to replace the 1922 treaty that had created the Soviet Union. His efforts prompted a coup on August 18, while Gorbachev was on holiday at Cape Foros in Crimea. The coup leaders included the Vice-President, Gennady Yanaev, the Prime Minister, the KGB chairman, the Defense Minister, and the Interior Minister. When Gorbachev refused to join them, the coup leaders announced that his powers had been transferred to Yanaev, and placed Gorbachev under arrest. The so-called "State Emergency Committee" or GKChP introduced a State of Emergency on August 18, declaring that reforms had "reached an impasse," leading to "unbelief, apathy, and despair." The country had become "ungovernable," and "extremist forces" were trying to "liquidate" the Soviet Union, using a "cynical exploitation of national feelings" as a screen for their ambitions.

The country – they declared – is sinking into an abyss of violence and lawlessness. Never before in the country's history has the propaganda of sex and violence gained such wide scope, jeopardizing the health and lives of future generations. Millions of people are demanding that measures be taken against the octopus of crime and glaring immorality. ... The pride and honor of Soviet people must be restored in full.<sup>79</sup>

The coup leaders promised to restore stability, cut prices, and re-establish the Soviet Union's international standing. Their statement ended with an appeal to all true patriots, but made no mention of socialism.<sup>80</sup>

But the coup was badly handled. Television viewers noticed Gennady Yanaev's hands trembling at the official press conference. Massive rallies in the capital persuaded army units to turn against the coup leaders; tank units sent to close the Russian parliament agreed, instead, to defend it. Boris Yeltsin, the elected leader of the new Russian parliament, called for resistance while standing on top of a tank sent into central Moscow by the coup leaders (Figure 16.7). On August 22, Gorbachev flew back to Moscow. Yeltsin suspended the Russian Communist Party, and on August 29 the All-Union Party or KPSU was suspended by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. On November 6 the Party was banned in the Russian Republic, and the Russian government took over its assets. But most of its members remained in office after surrendering their Party cards, to form a loosely organized core of officials that would eventually help preserve many elements of the old order. In the short run, though, as Suny puts it, the dismantling of the Party

removed the very sinews of the old system. Though it ended the possibility of restoring the old order, it also dissolved the musculature that made the country move. Decisions might be taken by the leadership, but there was no guarantee that they would be carried out.<sup>81</sup>



**Figure 16.7** Boris Yeltsin speaking from on top of a tank during the August 1991 “putsch.” In the background is the “White House,” the building that housed the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. Courtesy of TASS-ITAR.

Though the August coup failed, it is clear in retrospect that its leaders represented a large constituency, fearful for the future and keen to defend what they saw as the best elements of the Soviet legacy. The fact that all the coup leaders would be pardoned by the Russian parliament in 1994 is one of the strongest signs that many in power sympathized with their aims. Opinion polls at the time suggested that at least 40 percent of the population were sympathetic to the coup, and over the next 20 years it would become clear that large sectors of society valued many aspects of the Soviet and Stalinist legacy.<sup>82</sup> Yeltsin’s failure to disband the existing Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and replace it with a more genuinely elective body would help preserve these conservative power networks well after the Soviet Union itself had collapsed.

Immediately after the coup, real power shifted to the Union republics. On December 1, a Ukrainian referendum on independence was won with a 90 percent margin and the support of both Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. This persuaded Yeltsin that the Soviet Union could no longer survive. On December 8, Yeltsin met with the Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk, and the speaker of the Belarusian parliament, Stanislau Shushkevich, at Brezhnev’s former Belarusian hunting dacha in Belovezhkaia Pushcha. There, the three leaders effectively pronounced the death of the USSR, by announcing the formation of an informal “Commonwealth of Independent States” (CIS). On December 12, the Russian parliament approved the change and withdrew from the 1922 treaty creating the Soviet Union. On December 21, all but the three Baltic republics joined the new organization as



fully independent states. Their declaration concluded that, “With the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceases to exist.”

In December, the UN recognized Russia as the “continuer” state to the USSR. Of the four former Soviet republics with nuclear weapons, Belarus and Kazakhstan immediately joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty and surrendered their nuclear weapons to Russia. Ukraine, where many Soviet weapons had been built, mainly in Dnepropetrovsk, gave up its nuclear weapons and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992 only after heated internal debates.<sup>83</sup> The Russian Republic would emerge as the only former Soviet republic with nuclear weapons.

Gorbachev’s position as President was now meaningless. Like Kerenskii in October 1917, he was dangling in the air, without support or power. On December 25, 1991, he resigned as President of the USSR. Later that evening the Soviet flag, with its hammer and sickle, was lowered over the Kremlin, and replaced with the red, white, and blue flag of the Russian Republic. With the collapse of the center, all of Inner Eurasia would enter a turbulent new era. Just as in thirteenth-century Inner Eurasia after the death of Khan Mongke, regional power brokers suddenly faced the enormous challenge of building viable regional polities from the fragments of a once-unified Inner Eurasian empire.

## NOTES

- 1 See McNeill, “Energy, Population, and Environmental Change since 1750.”
- 2 Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*, 127.
- 3 Cited from Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 391, citing Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography*, 89.
- 4 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 242.
- 5 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 246.
- 6 Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 301–303.
- 7 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 472.
- 8 Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages,’” 241.
- 9 Cited in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 273.
- 10 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 363.
- 11 Cited by Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, 242, from an article in the Soviet journal *Ogonek* 20 (October 1988): 27.
- 12 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 366.
- 13 Lapidus, “Social Trends,” 193.
- 14 Harrison, “National Income,” 47.
- 15 Feshbach and Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR*, 4–5.
- 16 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 389, 407; Aslund, *Russia’s Capitalist Revolution*, 26.
- 17 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 382, 436.
- 18 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 383.
- 19 Zaslavskaja, *The Second Socialist Revolution*, 29.
- 20 Mironov, *Social History*, xix.

- 21 On the expansion of Soviet oil production since the 1960s see Grace, *Russian Oil Supply*.
- 22 Gaddy and Ickes, "Russia's Dependence on Resources," 309–340.
- 23 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 74–75.
- 24 Yergin, *The Prize*, 497–501; it was the Hungarian economist János Kornai who pointed out the immense significance of the fact that Soviet budgets were not as tightly constrained as those of capitalist enterprises or western governments; they were "soft."
- 25 Kryukov and Moe, "The Russian Natural Gas Sector," 365.
- 26 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 13–16.
- 27 Elliot, *Soviet Energy Balance*, 13, 17.
- 28 Kryukov and Moe, "The Russian Natural Gas Sector," 365.
- 29 Yergin, *The Prize*, 23.
- 30 Travin and Marganiya, "Resource Curse," 35.
- 31 Gaddy and Ickes, "Russia's Dependence on Resources," 315.
- 32 There is a good brief discussion of debates on the Russian resource curse in Hedlund, *Putin's Energy Agenda*, 31ff.; the phrase "resource curse" was first used in Auty, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies*.
- 33 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 389.
- 34 See Lewin, *Political Undercurrents*.
- 35 Allen, *Farm to Factory*, 207.
- 36 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 120.
- 37 There is a brief discussion of Hayek and Mises's arguments for the impossibility of planning, with some interesting counter-arguments against overvaluing price signals, in Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 18–19.
- 38 Dyker, *Restructuring the Soviet Economy*, 51.
- 39 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 380.
- 40 Smith, *Red Nations*, 217–218.
- 41 Brown, *Rise and Fall of Communism*, 486; Brown argues that under any other member of the 1985 Politburo but Gorbachev, reforms would have been insignificant.
- 42 Gaddy and Ickes, "Russia's Dependence on Resources," 315.
- 43 Gel'man and Marganiya, *Resource Curse and Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 7.
- 44 Travin and Marganiya, "Resource Curse," 37.
- 45 Brown, *Rise and Fall of Communism*, 482–483.
- 46 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 648.
- 47 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 8.
- 48 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 17.
- 49 Cited from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 406.
- 50 Brown, *Rise and Fall of Communism*, 442; Anders Aslund argues, "China had not fallen as deep into the enforced economic ignorance of communism as the Soviet Union, presumably because its period of communist rule had been much shorter." Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 40.
- 51 Gregory, *Before Command*, 8.
- 52 Brown, *Rise and Fall of Communism*, 442.
- 53 Schrad, *Vodka Politics*, 262–286.
- 54 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 26.
- 55 Grunwald et al., "Interview with Gorbachev," 15.
- 56 White, *After Gorbachev*, 28.
- 57 Dyker, *Restructuring the Soviet Economy*, 95.
- 58 Yergin, *The Prize*, 24.

- 59 Krueger, "Political Economy of the Rent-Seeking Society"; Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 55, proposes as a concise definition "profits in excess of the competitive level"; Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 85, define rent-seeking activity as "a search for financial benefits from state help or state protection against competition rather than from improving efficiency."
- 60 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 3.
- 61 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 111–112, on four main types of rent; *How Capitalism was Built*, 49, is on cooperative banks.
- 62 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 59.
- 63 Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 411.
- 64 Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia*, 36.
- 65 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 32.
- 66 Selyunin and Khanin, "Lukavaya tsifra."
- 67 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 39.
- 68 Cited from Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia*, 412–413.
- 69 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 124.
- 70 Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 423.
- 71 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 18.
- 72 Cited in White, *Gorbachev in Power*, 24.
- 73 "I cannot give up my principles," *Sovietskaia Rossiia*, extracted in Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 503–512.
- 74 A point made well in Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 95; and see Smith, *Red Nations*, 244.
- 75 Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 225.
- 76 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 61.
- 77 Dyker, *Restructuring the Soviet Economy*, 178.
- 78 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 95.
- 79 Cited from Suny, *Structure of Soviet History*, 525–528.
- 80 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 23.
- 81 Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 517.
- 82 Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 517.
- 83 Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 68.

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[17] *1950–1991: BEYOND THE  
HEARTLANDS: CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
INNER EURASIA IN THE SECOND HALF  
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*

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While the Soviet heartlands entered the fossil fuels era in the 1930s and 1940s, regions east of the Urals – in the Kazakh steppes and Central Asia, in Siberia, Mongolia, and Xinjiang – underwent a similar momentous transition only in the second half of the twentieth century. Though none of these regions were, strictly, colonies, their histories in the late twentieth century continued to be shaped by the needs and concerns of the Russian and Chinese heartlands.

The policies of the heartlands towards other regions of Inner Eurasia were dictated partly by the quasi-imperial role of the heartlands, and partly by historical inertia. In the Soviet Union, most aspects of Soviet policy towards other regions seem to have been accepted by an elite group whose members all belonged to the Soviet *nomenklatura*, whatever their cultural or national origins. There was remarkably little grumbling over the allocation of resources before the late 1980s. Like the leaders of the Mongol Empire, the Soviet elite had a shared commitment to the success of the imperial enterprise, and that limited conflicts over regional policies and ensured a broad consensus on most aspects of political, economic, and even cultural policy.

Until the system began to break down in the 1980s, most Soviet leaders accepted the established division of resources and power, under which regions away from the heartlands were valued primarily for their strategic and military significance, and as reserves of labor, land, food, timber, cotton, metal ores, precious metals, and, perhaps most important of all, fossil fuels. At the end of the 1980s, about 71 percent of all proven and probable Soviet reserves of oil came from western Siberia, 9 percent from Kazakhstan, and another 4 percent from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan; while 72 percent of proven and probable reserves of natural gas came from western Siberia, 3 percent from eastern Siberia and the Far East, and another 10 percent from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup>

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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However, in the final decades of the Soviet era, the periphery began to catch up with the heartlands. That is why, for most of central and eastern Inner Eurasia, the second half of the twentieth century was experienced, not as an era of stagnation or decline, but as a period of modernization and development. In many of these regions, industrialization really began during and soon after World War II, kick-started by the relocation of industries to the east after the Nazi invasion. By the end of 1941, over 1,500 entire factories had been transported to the Urals, to western Siberia, to the Volga region, or to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, and with them came perhaps 10 million workers and evacuees.<sup>2</sup> The fossil fuels revolution reached much of central and eastern Inner Eurasia in the less violent and less hurried post-Stalin era, and the methods used were generally less coercive than in the 1930s. Regional elites enjoyed greater stability than they had earlier, and some of the more extreme policies of the Stalin era were reversed. For example, members of the Muslim nations deported in 1943 and 1944 were allowed to return home after 1956, and several Autonomous Republics abolished in the 1940s were re-established, including those of the Kalmyk and the Chechens, but not the Crimean Tatars.

### *KAZAKHSTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA*

Most Soviet planners valued Kazakhstan mainly for its abundant, under-farmed steppes. But they also began to realize that it was rich in energy and mineral resources.

In the steppelands, the most important change in the post-war years was the Virgin Lands program, a vast, government-managed plan to raise Soviet agricultural production by creating large, mechanized farms in Inner Eurasia's central steppelands. The project brought under the plow large areas that had ceased to be used by pastoralists since the collectivization and sedentarization campaigns of the 1930s, and it Russified much of steppeland Kazakhstan. (See Chapter 14.) In this way, the Kazakh steppes finally joined the Pontic steppes as a major agrarian region, though their more delicate ecology and the sheer speed of change ensured that the transformation was generally less successful. With the important exception of Mongolia's steppelands, the campaign marked one of the last chapters in Inner Eurasia's long-delayed agricultural revolution. The Virgin Lands program also counts as one of the last great Inner Eurasian migrations of peoples. In just a few years, it brought to the steppes several hundred thousand migrants from many different parts of Inner Eurasia.<sup>3</sup>

Launched by Khrushchev in 1954, the Virgin Lands program was supervised by Party organizations and cadres. Between 1954 and 1956, the Party sent 300,000 people and 50,000 tractors to the steppes of Kazakhstan, western Siberia, and the North Caucasus. Though none of these regions were truly "virgin lands," having been used by pastoral nomads for several millennia, the idea of an ecological battle to conquer the natural world helped revive the enthusiastic campaign mentality of the 1930s and the war years. Many migrants really were volunteers, often leaving behind harsh conditions on collective farms, while some were sent after their release from the camps, under the amnesties

of 1953–1954. Like the founders of Magnitogorsk 20 years earlier, they often found themselves far from cities and supplies, with instructions to set up campsites and start plowing the fragile steppe soils. Their disillusionment was sometimes extreme. As in Magnitogorsk, life was chaotic and conflicts common, particularly where criminals were involved and vodka was available.<sup>4</sup> But many immigrants were genuinely enthusiastic, particularly those from camps or from impoverished villages, for whom the virgin lands promised a new life.

Some of the new state farms were planned carefully, with specially created parks and squares and with electricity and phone services. By the 1960s, the program had helped raise the level of services, of education, and of supplies in many areas of northern Kazakhstan. As a collective farm chairman of Korean origin told a western researcher, “The Virgin Lands opening not only improved the economy, but it significantly raised the standard of living and the culture of the village.”<sup>5</sup>

The Virgin Lands program brought some 36 million hectares into cultivation, an area equal to all the arable land of Canada. Soon Kazakhstan was producing more than 25 percent of Soviet grain and, for the first time in Soviet history, agricultural output rose beyond the level of 1913. But the methods of farming used were extensive rather than intensive, and in an arid region, it was inevitable that soon large areas would be turned to dust.

In contrast to the Pontic steppes, where Turkic and pastoralist traditions vanished almost entirely, in the Kazakh steppes there remained large populations of Kazakhs, even if they no longer nomadized. For them, the Virgin Lands program represented a final stage in the destruction of traditional lifeways that had already been undermined by almost 200 years of Russian fort-building, administration, and peasant colonization, and particularly by the ordeal of Stalinist collectivization. When asked in the early 1950s about the Virgin Lands program, the Kazakh Party leader, Rakhmizhan Shayakhmetov, replied, “Kazakhstan is for sheep, not for grain.” Khrushchev sacked him and replaced him with a Ukrainian, Panteleimon Ponomarenko, who would be succeeded in 1955 by a Khrushchev loyalist, Leonid Brezhnev. From 1960, the Kazakh Party would be led by a Kazakh, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, a close friend of Brezhnev and an enthusiast for the Virgin Lands program. Kunaev would rule the Party until 1986, when Gorbachev, in an attempt to break Kunaev’s cozy networks of clan-based power, replaced him with a Russian, Gennadi Kolbin, in a move that would provoke violent protests in the Kazakh capital, Almaty (see Chapter 16).

In the 1950s and 1960s Kazakhstan also began to produce increasing amounts of coal, iron ore, lead, copper, and nickel, particularly in the more Russified and urbanized northern regions transformed by the Virgin Lands program. Indeed, so diverse is the metal wealth of Kazakhstan that a Soviet geologist once joked that it could export the entire Table of Elements. Its mineral resources were often exploited using methods that showed little concern for the needs of local populations. In Oskemen (former Ust-Kamenogorsk), a plant manufacturing uranium fuel rods for nuclear power stations generated high levels of radiation that damaged the health of the town’s residents. In the 1970s, Kazakhstan’s western regions were found to contain large amounts



of gas and oil. The largest oil fields were in the west around Mangyshlak on the Caspian Sea.<sup>6</sup> Kazakhstan also acquired a modest manufacturing sector, whose industries included fertilizers, tractors, and bulldozers.

Kazakhstan's vast territory (it included 12 percent of the Soviet Union) also offered remote sites for two projects that were crucial to the Soviet military: rocketry and weapons testing. After the founding of the Baikonur launch site in 1955, initially to test intercontinental ballistic missiles, Kazakhstan became the center of the Soviet space program. The site of Baikonur was chosen partly because it was well away from settled areas and partly because the flat steppe-lands made radio transmission easier. Most Soviet space rockets would be launched from here, including the first artificial satellite, *Sputnik*, in 1957, the first unmanned mission to the moon in 1959, and the first manned space flight in April 1961. Soviet planners also used Kazakhstan to test nuclear weapons. One hundred miles from Semipalatinsk (Semey), in the north-east of Kazakhstan, the Soviet government conducted more than 450 nuclear tests between 1949 and 1989, when the test site was finally closed. Over 100 of those tests were atmospheric. Radiation carried by strong steppe winds left high levels of contamination, one of whose consequences was to double the rate of still births in Kazakhstan between 1960 and 1980.<sup>7</sup> The Soviet Union also created nuclear waste dumps near the shores of the Caspian Sea.

In Transoxiana, as in Kazakhstan and Siberia, most Soviet investment was used to develop regional resources rather than to diversify manufacturing. Agriculture, cotton, and extractive industries continued to dominate the regional economy. The importance of cotton increased as massive irrigation projects brought water to larger areas, many of them ecologically fragile. Between 1940 and 1965 the area under cotton increased by more than 50 percent, and by 1991, Central Asia was producing 92 percent of all Soviet cotton (almost 75 percent came from Uzbekistan alone) and 17 percent of global production. By then, cotton generated 60 percent of Uzbekistan's GNP and employed 40 percent of its workforce.<sup>8</sup> Production increased mainly because of expensive extensions to the region's ancient irrigation networks.

Here, too, economic policies took little account of the needs of local populations. From the 1960s, vast canals such as the Karakum canal in southern Turkmenistan have drained off as much as 90 percent of the water of the Amu Darya river. So extravagantly did local state farms use irrigation water (which was supplied virtually free under the planning system) that by the 1980s, over-irrigation and desalinization began to undermine production. By 1985, 12 percent less cotton was being produced than in 1980, and today the flow of water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers is just a tenth of the pre-Soviet levels.<sup>9</sup> By 1990, the Aral Sea had shrunk by 50 percent, its waters were too salty for many fish species, and it had retreated 90 miles from the once flourishing fishing port of Muynak. Add in massive loads of fertilizers and pesticides, and the environmental consequences were disastrous. In the late 1980s, when the global average of pesticides used per hectare was *c.*300 grams, state farms in Uzbekistan were using about 54 kilograms of pesticide.<sup>10</sup> Near the Aral Sea, child mortality increased in the 1980s as residues from DDT and other pesticides appeared in water supplies and foodstuffs.<sup>11</sup> "The Aral Sea's slow death

has wiped out vegetation and wildlife, worsened the climate, and exposed polluted salt flats to desert winds that spread poisons over tens of thousands of square miles.”<sup>12</sup>

Though the scale was new, for Central Asia this was an old story. On his way to Bukhara in the mid-sixteenth century, the English traveler Anthony Jenkinson visited “Sellizure” south of the Aral Sea. He wrote that,

The water that serveth all that Countrey is drawn by diches out of the riuer *Oxus*, unto the great destruction of the said riuer, of which cause it falleth not into the Caspian sea as it hath done in times past, and in short time all that lande is like to be destroyed, and to become a wildernes for want of water, when the riuer *Oxus* shall faile.<sup>13</sup>

“Sellizure” is today the ruined site of Dev-Kesken-Kala on the Uzboy, the dried-up ancient course of the Amu Darya.

In the late twentieth century, though most production continued to focus on rural produce, including cotton, wool, raw silk, leather, and carpets, the Soviet government also began to see Central Asia, like Kazakhstan, as a major source of energy and minerals. There was significant investment in hydroelectric power in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and in Central Asia as a whole electricity production increased by eight times between 1960 and 1985. Natural gas and smaller amounts of oil were found in Turkmenistan and on a smaller scale in Uzbekistan. The region also began to produce mercury, antimony, and uranium (mainly from Kyrgyzstan), as well as aluminum, while gold was mined in the Kyzylkum desert, on the border between Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.<sup>14</sup> In Turkmenistan, there was considerable production of non-ferrous materials.

By the 1980s, industrialization and modernization were beginning to transform lifeways in many areas of Kazakhstan and Transoxiana. Electricity and modern forms of communications mainly benefited the towns, with their large Russian populations. But all areas benefited from free education and health care, better water supplies, and cheap energy, housing, and transport. Before the Soviet period, rates of literacy in Central Asia were as low as 3 or 4 percent. By 1960 they had reached 60 percent and by the end of the Soviet period adult literacy rates were as high as in most of the Soviet Union, while infant mortality rates were lower and life expectancy higher than in other Muslim countries such as Turkey and Iran. Population growth was exceptionally high by Soviet standards. Income levels and consumption levels remained lower than in most of the Soviet Union, but were much higher than they had been in the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

Politically, the most significant change in the second half of the century was the consolidation of indigenous elites. By 1978, almost 60 percent of the Uzbek leadership consisted of Uzbeks and local leaders made up a similar proportion in Turkmenistan. These officials were very much part of the Soviet system and served its interests loyally. But like many middle-level politicians in the Brezhnev era, they managed to consolidate their local power, using regional clan networks as well as the quasi-clan networks of the Soviet *nomenklatura*.

Traditional clan ties were similar to, but much more extensive than, the Muscovite ties of *mestnichestvo*, which had been abolished at the end of the seventeenth century, though the term was still used in the Soviet period to refer to local political networks. Clan networks survived in Central Asia partly because of the late emergence of modern state structures, and partly because, where markets were so undeveloped, they played an important role in the allocation of resources. Their importance probably increased in the Soviet period, as that of traditional tribal loyalties was undermined.<sup>16</sup> Clans often consisted of many thousands of members related by kinship, work ties, and through neighborhoods (*mahallas* or villages, *qishloq*). They were dominated by elders and wealthy elites, but provided both protection and services and even scarce goods to their members.<sup>17</sup>

Within each republic, networks of clan loyalty shielded local leaders to some extent from the power of Moscow. Dinmukhamed Kunaev ruled through such networks in Kazakhstan. The Rashidov network in Uzbekistan was so powerful that one Uzbek scholar described First Secretary Sharof Rashidov (1917–1983), the leader of Uzbekistan from 1959–1983, as “a nineteenth-century khan.”<sup>18</sup> But clan ties touched all levels of Central Asian politics.

Clan politics also operates at the subnational level, as *hokims* [governors] appoint relatives and clan members to key positions within the regional or *raion* government structures. Within the rural sector, the *kolkhoz* ... directors give land or prized positions on the farms to their relatives and friends. During the Soviet period, brigades on the collective farms incorporated wholesale the *avlod*, *urugh*, or *aul*, the most traditional kin-based form of clan network.

Under Brezhnev, local leaders such as Kunaev and Rashidov thrived as long as they shared the goals of the Soviet system and continued to meet its economic demands. In Transoxiana, that meant, above all, meeting targets for cotton production and maintaining order. After Brezhnev’s death, investigations were launched during the so-called “Uzbek Affair” into widespread falsification of figures on cotton production. Rashidov himself died before the investigations had proceeded far, but most leading officials in Uzbekistan would be replaced, many of them by Russians. In retrospect, Rashidov has been seen by many Uzbeks as a national hero who tried to protect Uzbek interests.<sup>19</sup>

After the violent attempts to suppress religious beliefs in the Stalin era, Islam survived and even flourished in the second half of the century, along with the region’s robust regional cultures. Particularly in rural areas, where there was little Russian presence, traditional kinship and clan structures were so closely bound up with religious traditions that Islam became a vital marker of identity. Indeed, the persecution of Islam at the official level and the decline in formal Islamic education in the Soviet era ensured that Islam became increasingly important as a private form of identity, even as it lost many of the public features of an institutionalized religion.

Being Muslim had little to do with personal belief or observance of ritual and everything to do with customs and way of life. ... For the vast majority of Central Asians, Islam was a form of localism, a marker that opposed Muslims/Central Asians/locals to Europeans/outside/Russians.<sup>20</sup>

Far from blending together, as some Soviet officials had hoped, the cultures of Muslim Central Asians and immigrants from other parts of the Soviet Union remained quite distinct. And this had important consequences, particularly on demographic patterns. Unlike the Soviet Union's Slavic populations, whose birth rates were falling, Central Asian birth rates remained high, and Muslim populations began to grow faster than Slavic populations. Low levels of urbanization, particularly among the Islamic populations of Central Asia, also protected traditional social and cultural structures. In 1989, while levels of urbanization had reached more than 65 percent in the Soviet Union as a whole, they were below 40 percent in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, and below 30 percent in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>21</sup>

In the Brezhnev era, under powerful and increasingly self-confident local leaders, new national traditions blended with traditional identities.

An enormous range of behavior and values were subsumed under the rubric of national traditions: they included marking births, weddings, and funerals with often lavish feasts; circumcising all boys ...; eating certain foods, furnishing one's living quarters in a certain way ...; placing a high value on families.<sup>22</sup>

Islam and the cultural traditions associated with it became integral to emerging Central Asian identities and "national" traditions. And in the era of *perestroika*, the weakening of Soviet cultural control allowed a rapid revival of Islamic worship, traditions, and education throughout Central Asia.

Despite Central Asia's semi-colonial status, much changed in the final decades of the Soviet era. Rising living standards and educational levels, a new accommodation between Islam and Soviet ideology, and increasing security of tenure for Central Asian politicians may help explain why, in 1991, neither elites nor the population at large showed much enthusiasm for the breakdown of the Soviet Empire.

## SIBERIA

In Siberia, the crude, brutal, and lop-sided methods of development used under Stalin were largely abandoned after his death. Many camps were closed in the 1950s, GULAG was dissolved in 1957, and the largest camp systems, including Dalstroi and Norilsk, were shut down.<sup>23</sup> Slave labor ceased to be the main driver of growth in the Far North.

After the transformations of the Stalin era, many indigenous Siberians began to live settled lives. Many moved into prefabricated houses on "state farms," sent their children to Russian-speaking schools, and worked for wages. While their children often headed for the cities, some tried to defend what aspects of their traditional cultures still survived, by preserving languages and religious traditions, and defending traditional lands against encroachment by mining enterprises and farmers.<sup>24</sup>

The center began to invest not just in timber, metal ores, and energy, but also in Siberian manufacturing, transportation, and education. The Far North

in particular was transformed. “[B]y the late 1960s the traditional hunting grounds and reindeer pastures of the far north had become the major source of Soviet phosphates, nickel, gold, tin, mica, and tungsten, as well as timber.”<sup>25</sup> New industries appeared, including oil and gas production, aluminum manufacture, large machine-building complexes, and defense industries, as well as hydroelectric projects such as the Bratsk dam on the Angara river, which was for a time the world’s largest single generator of electricity. By the late 1970s, western Siberia was by far the largest producer of natural gas in the Soviet Union, and also a major producer of oil. By the 1980s, Siberia accounted for 10 percent of Soviet GDP and 50 percent of its foreign currency earnings.<sup>26</sup>

Rapid urbanization and migration from collectivized villages turned modern Siberia into a land of cities rather than villages. By 1959, half of its population lived in towns.<sup>27</sup> Higher wages, and even socialist idealism, attracted economic migrants to remote regions, despite the often poor conditions and shortages of goods. Travel was revolutionized. Most railways were electrified, but the arrival of air transport, which could reach remote areas more easily than railways, had almost as much of an impact as the first railroads. Under Stalin, airports had been built in major cities such as Irkutsk, Tomsk, and Novosibirsk, as well as in more remote cities such as Norilsk. But air travel really took off in the second half of the century, encouraged by subsidized fares and the building of new airports. In 1951, just over 300,000 people flew in Siberia; by 1980, 19 million flew in the region.<sup>28</sup>

In an era of grandiose projects, including the Virgin Lands program, the Bratsk dam, and the BAM (*Baikal-Amur Magistral* or railway), “opening up Siberia” began to be seen not just as a planning goal, but also as a patriotic goal, and voluntary migration began to replace the forced migrations of earlier periods. From 1954, construction of the “academy town” of Akademgorodok outside Novosibirsk brought huge numbers of scholars and scientists to Siberia. Akademgorodok was home to the Siberian branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, created in 1957. It was intended to create a new type of scholarly and scientific environment in which scholars could talk across disciplines, free from some of the constraints of other Soviet research institutions.

But many of these grandiose projects, like those in other parts of the Soviet Union, were implemented with little thought for their human or environmental side effects. Many of Siberia’s towns were highly polluted, and large hydroelectric projects flooded some of Siberia’s most fertile soils. Siberian agriculture never fully recovered from the disasters of collectivization. Indeed, the amount of farmed land in Siberia declined over the years, and Siberia ceased to be agriculturally self-sufficient.<sup>29</sup> Such distortions, though less extreme than in the Stalin period, were perhaps inevitable in a region whose development was still dominated by the priorities of the Soviet heartland.

## MONGOLIA

Much had changed in Stalin-era Mongolia, but in the middle of the century its economy remained archaic. In the 1960s, most Mongolians still lived in



**Map 17.1** Google Earth map of Mongolia.

traditional *gers*, so that a visitor from Chinggis Khan’s empire would have found much that was familiar. Serious economic planning did not begin until 1948, and not until 1959 was most of the economy brought under state control. (Map 17.1.)<sup>30</sup>

The Stalinist dictator, Choibalsan, died in 1952, just before Stalin. He was replaced by a collective leadership, within which Jaagiin Tsendenbal (1916–1991) soon emerged as the dominant figure. Tsendenbal was Russian-educated, had a Russian wife, and had been hand-picked by the Soviet leadership. He had been Choibalsan’s second-in-command since 1940, and would rule the country as sole leader until 1984. After his dismissal, he was replaced by Jambyn Batmonkh, who would rule until the end of one-party rule in March 1990.

After the disastrous, and unsuccessful, attempts at collectivization in the early 1930s, Tsendenbal launched a new round of collectivization in 1953, when *negdels* (collectives) controlled just over 3 percent of the country’s livestock. The main justification for the new round of collectivization was to improve the technical level of herding, which was still the country’s main economic activity. Aware of the disasters of the early 1930s, the government introduced collectivization more cautiously and less violently, and relied more on economic pressures, though the threat of coercion was always present. The government systematically discriminated in favor of collective herders and against those with private herds. It levied lower compulsory quotas and taxes on collectives,

provided them with veterinary and other technical services, and made available large tracts of pastureland. By 1960 almost all herders belonged to one of about 300 *negdels*, most of which coincided with the local *sumum*, so that it became usual to refer to them as *sumum-negdels*.<sup>31</sup> About 50 state farms were primarily agricultural; the rest kept livestock. While herds were collectivized, each family was allowed to keep a maximum of 50 animals for their own use, in a Mongolian equivalent of the private plots on Soviet *kolkhozy*. In return for wages, families had to supply livestock or livestock products.<sup>32</sup> Conventional wisdom held that a household needed at least 100 animals to survive comfortably and yield enough animals to market some produce, so the permitted private herds were enough to supplement a household's income but not to make it self-sufficient. By the early 1960s, wages from collectives, calculated on the basis of labor-days, were probably the main source of income for most rural families.<sup>33</sup>

The *negdels* were large, consisting on average of about 500 households in the early 1960s. Each had its own manager and administrative staff. The *negdel* centers in which these administrators lived were like "little villages of tents and wood or brick buildings," each with its own "schools, clinics, veterinary stations, clubs, libraries, shops and post-offices."<sup>34</sup> In fact, the *negdels* reproduced many of the patterns of pre-revolutionary herding, in which nobles or lamaseries had organized herding on large scales and supplied services that individual households could not provide. Like feudal overlords, the *negdels* were authoritarian, but they also provided protection and insurance. The continuities were evident to the herders themselves, who continued to refer to the *negdel* livestock as *alban mal* or "official animals," a phrase derived from the *alba*, the traditional feudal obligations of commoners to their overlords.<sup>35</sup> The importance of *negdel* services would become apparent in the 1990s, when their breakdown left many herders in extreme difficulty.

We have a vivid, and surprisingly positive, if nostalgic, account of life on a *negdel* from a herder called Sodnomjav, who was interviewed in the 1990s after farms had been privatized. When interviewed, he was in his seventies and had lived through the entire communist era.

In the collective period the organisation of joint work, moving to other pastures, and *oto* [distant moves for fattening] was very good. The services provided to the herdsmen were also excellent. Also, the making of hay [for fodder] and the repair of *hashaa* [enclosures and sheds] was done well. People did not need to use ox or camel carts, so they became unused to this sort of work and expected to receive state motor transportation all the time. This was because the state farm concentrated all the camels in one or two *ails* [households] of specialist camel-herders. So most herders did not have camels for transportation. ...

The herdsmen had hay and so forth provided for them, and were instructed where and when to move, so they did not choose places to pasture the livestock themselves. They worked only at the command of, and under the direction of, their leaders, and they moved and worked as a group, together, when the leader instructed. For example, cutting and making hay, shearing sheep and taking hair from the other animals, dipping the animals, all these things the brigade or groups (5–10 *ails*) did together. So during this period the people had no personal initiative. They ended up just following instructions and waiting to be told what to do.<sup>36</sup>

After collectivization, the *negdels* did indeed supply new technological services, such as trucks to move tents during migrations or to move hay for fodder. But the number of livestock barely rose over the next 20 years. In the 1970s there were still about 24 million animals, no more than in the late 1950s, which suggests there was little improvement in the care of livestock. Animals still died of cold and *dzhut*, even though the government set up special units equipped with helicopters and trucks to supply fodder to animals in crises.<sup>37</sup> In practice, like Soviet collective farms, the main contribution of the *negdels* to the national economy was not to raise the level of livestock production but to maintain existing production levels as more and more of the rural population left for the towns.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1956 and 1989, levels of urbanization rose from 22 percent to 57 percent. By then, as many as a quarter of Mongolia's population may have lived in Ulaanbaatar alone. Wage work increased. Between 1956 and 1963 the number of wage workers and officials rose from 25 percent to 46 percent.<sup>39</sup> These changes reflected a slow diversification of Mongolia's economy and society. Though the Soviet Union had valued Mongolia mainly as a source of livestock products, the Mongolian government understood the importance of creating a more diverse productive base. That aspiration was demonstrated symbolically in 1960 when the government added wheat sheaves and an industrial cogwheel to the national seal, which had previously, on Stalin's recommendation, contained only images of livestock and a livestock herder (Figure 17.1).

In the 1950s, the government tried to expand agricultural production in the Mongolian steppes through a "Virgin Lands" program dominated, like the Soviet program, by huge state farms and large-scale mechanization. As with the Soviet program, initial successes were not sustained. Indeed, agricultural productivity may have declined, in part because it was so dependent on fertilizers and equipment from the Soviet Union. Total grain output in 1980 was no higher than in 1965, though the sown area was larger.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to the Pontic and Kazakh steppes, agriculture has not become the dominant form of production in the Mongolian steppes.

Industry and the fossil fuels revolution had little impact in Mongolia before the 1950s, and when change came, it came slowly. In 1949, two joint Soviet–Mongolian companies were formed, Sovmongolmetall and Mongolneft'. The first mined fluorspar, tin, and uranium in Choibalsan province, while Mongolneft' extracted and refined oil in Eastern Gobi province from the Züünbayan field. Mongolia got 20 percent of the profits on oil, but neither company was successful, and in 1957 the Soviet Union "donated its shares to Mongolia." By the late 1950s, Mongolian production of coal and oil was mostly for the tiny domestic market, and in 1969 oil production stopped at Züünbayan because it was so uneconomical. In the 1970s, Soviet aid helped build the industrial city of Darhan and the copper mines of Erdenet, and by the early 1980s, there were at least 32,000 Soviet workers in the country. Coal mining increased at the Baganuur field near Erdenet, and a new power plant was built to supply the Erdenet mines. Taken together, the Erdenet mines, coal field, and power plant formed the most important industrial center in Mongolia in the late twentieth century, though it was symptomatic that they depended largely on





**Figure 17.1** The Mongolian national emblem changed as the country industrialized. Jam123, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coat\\_of\\_arms\\_of\\_the\\_People%27s\\_republic\\_of\\_Mongolia.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coat_of_arms_of_the_People%27s_republic_of_Mongolia.svg). Used under CC0 1.0 <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>.

Soviet equipment, spares, and diesel fuel, as well as on Soviet workers and technicians.<sup>41</sup> Coal mining expanded largely to supply these new industrial cities with fuel. Mongolia's first railways were built in the late 1930s for military purposes. In 1949 a line was completed from Ulaanbaatar to Ulan-Ude on the Trans-Siberian railroad, and in 1956 work began on a rail link to China. By the mid-1950s it was also possible to fly from Ulaanbaatar to all the major provinces.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1980s, for the first time, industry began to rival herding within the national economy. The percentage of workers employed in herding and farming fell from 70 percent in 1960 to under 40 percent in 1990, while the



**Figure 17.2** Mongolian *ger*. Courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh.

percentage of workers in industry and mining rose from 14 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1990.<sup>43</sup> Between 1940 and 1990, the share of GNP from industry, mining, and manufacturing rose from 13 percent to 49 percent, while livestock production and agriculture fell from 64 percent to 16 percent. Meanwhile, traditional manufactures based on livestock products, such as the production of hides, wool, and cashmere, also flourished and began to produce exportable goods.

Industrialization slowly began to transform Mongolian lifeways. Even the traditional dwelling, the *ger*, began to change, as new fabrics were used, timber floors were added, metal ovens replaced open fireplaces, electric generators allowed the use of electric fans, radios, and even televisions, and lorries began to carry *gers* on migrations instead of camels (Figure 17.2). Many traditional rural skills were lost, particularly among the young, while the many herders who settled in towns began to acquire a modern education and modern consumer goods such as TVs, which first appeared in 1967.<sup>44</sup> By 1970, 35 percent of Mongolian households had a radio and 6 percent a TV. By 1985, 51 percent of households had radio and 30 percent had TV. Meanwhile, literacy rates rose from 24 percent in 1940 to 95 percent in 1956. Health care improved with the introduction of modern medicine and clinics to eliminate venereal disease. Simple changes, such as the introduction of improved chimneys in yurts, helped reduce respiratory disease, one of the main causes of premature death. Between 1960 and 1980 life expectancy rose from 47 to 58 years and infant mortality fell even in rural areas. These changes help explain the rapid growth of the Mongolian population from 750,000 in 1944 (similar to the population in the time of Chinggis Khan) to over 2 million in 1989.

Social, economic, and cultural change, and a loosening Soviet grip, may help explain a growing interest in Mongolia's past. There was a mild post-Stalin thaw, and a partial relaxation in censorship, during which traditional Mongolian themes began to reappear within Mongolian culture. In 1962, a conference was held to mark the 800th anniversary of the birth of Chinggis Khan. A committee of historians and astrologers met at the Gandan monastery in Ulaanbaatar and determined that Chinggis Khan was born on May 31, 1162.<sup>45</sup> A historian, Academician Natsagdorj, director of the History Institute of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, gave a lecture on Chinggis Khan's role as the founder of Mongolian statehood, and a monument was erected to Chinggis Khan at his presumed birthplace. This was the first official acknowledgment of Chinggis Khan's role in Mongolian statehood. However, under Soviet pressure (after all, the Russian experience of Chinggis Khan's empire was wholly negative), officials criticized this brief display of an embryonic nationalism, and the subject disappeared only to be revived again in the late 1980s.<sup>46</sup> The monument to Chinggis Khan survived.

Mongolia's international isolation ended, finally, in 1961, when Mongolia joined the United Nations, and by 1965 Mongolia had formal diplomatic relations with 35 different countries. By 1987, when the USA recognized Mongolia, the number had increased to over 100. Recognition encouraged new cultural and trading contacts. However, until the 1980s, there was no loosening of the Soviet grip on Mongolia, particularly when tensions with China were high. In 1969, Soviet troops returned to Mongolia.<sup>47</sup>

In summary, Mongolia underwent a partial modernization within the Soviet sphere, but when the Soviet grip eventually began to relax, it became apparent that beneath the Sovietized veneer, traditional forms of herding were indeed surviving as well as traditions of Mongolian patriotism and attachment to religious institutions. How strong these traditions were would become apparent in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## *XINJIANG WITHIN A REVIVING CHINESE EMPIRE*

In 1949, with the arrival of units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Xinjiang became, once more, a remote province of a revived Chinese Empire, and most of its ties to Soviet Central Asia were severed for much of the late twentieth century. (Map 17.2.)

In October 1955, Xinjiang was renamed the Uighur Autonomous Region. The name made ethnic sense because, under the first PRC census, conducted in 1953, Uighurs made up almost 75 percent of the region's population of just over 5 million people, while Han and Hui (Muslim Han) groups made up just 5 percent.<sup>48</sup> Chinese authorities would eventually recognize some 13 different ethnic groups in the region, including Han, Hui (Muslim Han), Kazakh, and others. Special administrative regions were created for some of these groups.

In the early 1950s, China ruled Xinjiang with a relatively light hand, administering it primarily through the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its commander, Wang Zhen. The army absorbed former soldiers of the Guomindang



**Map 17.2** Google Earth map of Xinjiang.

and the Ili National Army, and ruled through local power brokers. For a time, while China maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, Xinjiang continued to trade with Soviet Central Asia. In 1950, China gave the Soviet Union access to the oil and metal resources of Zungharia, in return for a large loan.

However, there were some immediate changes. New restrictions were placed on mosques and Muslim educational institutions, many *waqf* endowments were expropriated, and the application of sharia law was restricted. Collectivization and plans to expropriate former landowners proceeded cautiously, particularly among herding groups such as the Kazakh. In policies that would have seemed familiar under the Han or the Qing dynasties, Han immigration was encouraged, beginning with demobilized PLA soldiers and exiled convicts, many of whom were settled on military farms, under a large state organization known as the *Bingtuan*. The *Bingtuan* would flourish, and the labor under its control was often used for large agricultural projects such as planting and harvesting or the building and renovation of irrigation canals and *qarez*. Such institutions and projects helped increase the farmed area of Xinjiang from 1.2 to 3.2 million hectares between 1949 and 1961.

In 1955, a Uighur was appointed as titular head of Xinjiang, but real power was now held by the new army commander and First Secretary of the Communist Party, Wang Enmao, a veteran of the Long March, who would dominate the region for much of the next 30 years.

Two factors dominated Xinjiang's history in the next 20 years. The first was the revolutionary reforms of the Maoist era. The second was the closing of the border with the USSR as a result of the Sino-Soviet conflict, which turned

Xinjiang into an economic and political backwater, a barrier rather than a corridor for trans-Eurasian exchanges. Both changes were associated with official intolerance of Xinjiang's distinctive cultural traditions and local displays of nationalism, which the government interpreted as evidence of Soviet subversion.

The over-ambitious economic plans of the Maoist "Great Leap Forward," from 1958–1961, included attempts to settle nomads as farmers. They resulted in large-scale famines and the death of large numbers of livestock. The government also attacked Islamic institutions and traditions, banned the Hajj, and accelerated Han immigration to Xinjiang as part of its plans to reduce ethnic and cultural differences. In 1962, after 200,000 had fled to Soviet Central Asia, the border with the Soviet Union was closed.

Even more chaotic was the era of the Cultural Revolution, from 1965 to 1968, during which there were occasional armed conflicts between Han officials, Red Guards, and representatives of the *Bingtuan*. Local cultural, artistic, and religious traditions were attacked with particular savagery by Red Guards and other radicals, and mosques and even Qur'ans were desecrated. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, is supposed to have said, "What is special about your tiny Xinjiang? I despise you."<sup>49</sup> So great was the political and economic chaos of this era that many Han immigrants returned to China, and Xinjiang, which had once exported grain, had to import it. In 1964, China carried out its first nuclear tests in the remote Lop Nor region of Xinjiang. Relations with the Soviet Union also worsened during the Cultural Revolution. Between 1966 and 1969 there would be several military clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops along the Xinjiang border.

Some degree of stabilization became possible only after the death of Mao in 1976 and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Once again, officials began to treat Islam and regional cultural traditions more tolerantly, and in the 1980s there would be something of an Islamic revival. Many new mosques were built and new Muslim educational institutions were established. As in Soviet Central Asia, official repression of religion was turning Islam and Islamic traditions and rituals into important markers of ethnic identity. In 1981, Wang Enmao, who like Deng had been demoted during the Cultural Revolution, was returned to power along with many other purged officials.

Economic reforms allowed the partial revival of an economy that had been brought close to subsistence for many years. The production and sale of grain and cotton increased, and Xinjiang began once again to export cotton, almost all of which came from the Tarim basin and the Turfan oasis. In 1949, Xinjiang produced only *c.*10,000 tonnes of cotton; by 1990, it was producing over 900,000 tonnes, and cotton was using more and more of the region's scarce supplies of water.<sup>50</sup> Economic growth began once more to attract Han migrants, slowly turning Zungharia into a Han-dominated region, particularly in its major cities and its capital, Urumqi. The Tarim basin remained overwhelmingly Uighur.

By the late 1980s, both the economy and cultural traditions of Xinjiang had revived, but industrialization and modernization had made little progress. As Millward writes, the region's cities

retained the feel of traditional Central Asian cities, with packed earth roads, winding neighbourhood lanes under dusty shade-trees, dense bazaars and animal-powered transportation. In Kashgar in 1990 the jingle of horsebells remained more common than the roar of motorcycle engines or blare of taxi horns.<sup>51</sup>

Not until the 1990s would Xinjiang enter the fossil fuels era.

## NOTES

- 1 Dienes, Dobozi, and Radetzi, *Energy and Economic Reform*, 38, 56
- 2 Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft, *Economic Transformation*, Table 29b, 300.
- 3 Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’.”
- 4 Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’,” 242, 246.
- 5 Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’,” 255.
- 6 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 90–93.
- 7 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 94–96.
- 8 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 20; Stringer, “Soviet Development in Central Asia,” 149.
- 9 Feshbach and Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR*, 74; Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 20; Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 8.
- 10 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 428.
- 11 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 14–15; Feshbach and Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR*, 74–75, 78–79.
- 12 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 11; and see Feshbach and Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR*, Ch. 4, 73–89.
- 13 Bater and French, *Studies in Russian Historical Geography*, 1: 18.
- 14 Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’,” 20.
- 15 Stringer, “Soviet Development in Central Asia,” 155–157; in the late Soviet era, populations were growing at almost 2 percent per annum; Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 11–12.
- 16 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 17, 37, 40.
- 17 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 17–18, 333.
- 18 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 106, 112.
- 19 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 414.
- 20 Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 107.
- 21 Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 93.
- 22 Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 99.
- 23 Applebaum, *Gulag*, 457.
- 24 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 340ff.
- 25 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 337.
- 26 Naumov, *History of Siberia*, 205–206.
- 27 Naumov, *History of Siberia*, 209.
- 28 Hartley, *Siberia*, 221.
- 29 Naumov, *History of Siberia*, 208–209.
- 30 Bawden, *Modern History*, 394.
- 31 Bawden, *Modern History*, 402.
- 32 Sneath, “Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization,” 225–226.
- 33 For the figure of 100 or more animals for self-sufficiency, see Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 121; Bawden, *Modern History*, 398.
- 34 Bawden, *Modern History*, 403–404; cinemas were still mobile in the 1960s.

- 35 Sneath, "Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization," 229–231.  
 36 Humphrey and Sneath, *The End of Nomadism?*, 39–40.  
 37 Sneath, "Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization," 223; Bawden, *Modern History*, 404, 430.  
 38 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 156.  
 39 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 379; Bawden, *Modern History*, 408–409.  
 40 Alan Sanders, afterword to Bawden, *Modern History*, 430.  
 41 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 357; Sanders, afterword to Bawden, *Modern History*, 426–427.  
 42 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 157.  
 43 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 378.  
 44 Nakami, Batbayar, and Boldbaatar, "Mongolia," 363; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 379; Bawden, *Modern History*, 409.  
 45 Boldbaatar, "Eight-Hundredth Anniversary of Chinggis Khan," 240.  
 46 Bawden, *Modern History*, 417–418; and see Boldbaatar, "Eight-Hundredth Anniversary of Chinggis Khan," 237–246.  
 47 Sanders, afterword to Bawden, *Modern History*, 425–426.  
 48 The following section is based largely on Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, Chs. 6 and 7.  
 49 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 274.  
 50 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 429.  
 51 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 284.

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## [18] *1991–2000: BUILDING NEW STATES: GENERAL TRENDS AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION*

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“[F]rom the very beginning, Russia was created as a supercentralized state. That’s practically laid down in its genetic code, its traditions, and the mentality of its people.”<sup>1</sup>

*Vladimir Putin*

“Central Asia, the Caucasus, and even Russia have not in fact been struggling toward democracy. They are not temporarily trapped between communist dictatorship and liberal democracy. Rather, like many failed (or half-heartedly attempted) African transitions of the 1950s and 1960s, and again in the 1990s, these regimes have comfortably settled into new forms of authoritarianism that might continue for decades.”<sup>2</sup>

### *INTRODUCTION: AFTER THE BREAKUP: THE WORLD AND INNER EURASIA*

The breakup of the Mongol Empire in 1260 snapped threads that had woven Inner Eurasia into a single mobilizational system with many links to Outer Eurasia. When the Mongol Empire collapsed, Eurasia as a whole became less connected. Seven hundred years later, the breakup of the Soviet Empire had the opposite effect. It ended the divisions of the Cold War and allowed the creation of new commercial, intellectual, and personal networks within a capitalist system that now included most of the world. The mechanisms of breakdown were also different. The Mongol Empire was seriously over-extended by 1260, which is why the death of a leader was enough to break it apart. Modern technologies of communication and transportation made distance more manageable in 1991, which explains why the Russian Republic, the largest surviving *ulus* after 1991, reached from eastern Siberia to the Baltic and the Black Sea.

The Soviet collapse can also be seen as a continuation of the process of decolonization that began after World War II. Like Europe’s former colonies, post-Soviet states had to build new forms of legitimacy, new power structures,

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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and new economies within a capitalist system in which they were latecomers, and within borders that were often arbitrary and made little geographical, ethnic, political, or economic sense.

This chapter focuses on the 10 years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, though occasionally it looks towards the first decade of the twenty-first century. It will describe some general trends, and then focus on the Russian Federation, the largest and most influential of the new post-Soviet states. Chapter 19 will survey more briefly the histories of new states in other parts of Inner Eurasia.

The Mongol Empire split into four new *uluses*, two of them within Inner Eurasia. Though all inherited Mongol traditions of governance, they would have quite distinctive histories depending on their geography, resources, and neighbors, and on the quality of their leadership. The Soviet Empire split into almost 30 distinct republics, 10 of which fall clearly within Inner Eurasia. All post-Soviet states inherited similar traditions of governance from the Soviet era, but they, too, would evolve along very diverse pathways.

I will refer to the 10 unambiguously Inner Eurasian post-Soviet republics using the awkward but precise acronym PSIERs, or Post-Soviet Inner Eurasian Republics. I include within this category the Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, and Azerbaijan. I exclude Moldova and the Caucasus republics (apart from Azerbaijan), as well as the post-Soviet polities of the Baltic and eastern Europe, on the grounds that these were not unambiguously part of Inner Eurasia. Though part of the Soviet Empire, the republics of the Caucasus had histories shaped by their quite distinctive geography, while Moldova and the Baltic republics had long been oriented to the West rather than towards Inner Eurasia. Ukraine (whose name means “Borderland”) is an interesting in-between case because, like the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, it straddled the imaginary but important border we have drawn between Inner and Outer Eurasia. Ukraine’s in-betweenness would have a profound impact on its post-Soviet history.

The idea of a distinct group of Post-Soviet Inner Eurasian Republics is helpful because there were some striking differences between the histories of the PSIERs and other post-Soviet states. These differences provide one more justification for the central argument of this book: that the history of Inner Eurasia really does have a certain coherence.

Of all the PSIERs, by far the largest, wealthiest, most powerful, and most influential was the Russian Federation, which included about 75 percent of the territory of the former Soviet Union. Russia survived now as a cut-down version of the Soviet Empire. So large was the Russian Federation that it continued, though with diminished force, to play the role of Inner Eurasia’s heartland.

At the time of writing, 26 years after the collapse, all 10 PSIERs still exist, though Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine have survived serious internal conflicts, and there have been dangerous border conflicts, the latest being between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. All 10 PSIERs belong to the United Nations. All the PSIERs now have market or semi-market economies, and are integrated to some degree within world markets. And all have retained

many of the forms of democratic government. But after early experiments with market reforms and more democratic styles of rule, most swung back towards more centralized styles of government and economic management. None have retained the Soviet Union's Marxist ideology despite widespread nostalgia for the Soviet era.

## *THE CHALLENGE*

All post-Soviet leaders understood that the Soviet strategy of direct mobilization would no longer work in a world where growth trumped raw mobilization. They understood that their mobilizational strategies would have to incorporate market forces to some degree. Many post-Soviet countries in eastern and central Europe and the Baltic republics welcomed the challenge of economic reform with optimism and enthusiasm. But in Inner Eurasia, most leaders approached the task more cautiously and with much less enthusiasm. They knew that as they tried to build new systems with new forms of legitimacy, they would have to maneuver carefully to find the right balance between market forces and long-established traditions of direct mobilization and centralized governance.

All post-Soviet republics would end up somewhere on a spectrum between two main models of reform, which I will describe as the “neoliberal” and “Chinese” models of reform.

The neoliberal reform model was associated with the “Washington consensus,” a series of economic strategies applied to Latin American countries by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the 1970s and 1980s it shaped the economic reforms of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.<sup>3</sup> Advocates of this model insisted that excessive government interference in economic matters stifled market forces and slowed growth. To unleash the full creative potential of competitive markets, governments needed to limit their economic role. Applied to the former Soviet Empire, this model suggested the urgency of privatization, price liberalization, and a reduction in the economic role and power of the state. Key steps towards reform would include: the privatization of state-owned assets, deregulation of prices, the removal of most state subsidies, and the liberalization of internal and external trade. And change had to be fast to lock reforms in place. It was clear that such reforms would cause widespread suffering at first, but supporters of the Washington consensus model insisted that reforms would quickly unleash the market driver of growth, generating wealth that would trickle down to the population at large. Most neoliberal economists insisted that these were universal principles, so there was little need to modify reform programs to account for the particular historical, institutional, and cultural traditions of different countries. Twenty-six years after the reforms began, it is easier to see the limits of such a program. But in the early 1990s, for politicians seeking a rapid transition to a prosperous market economy (a transition to “normality,” as many put it), such programs offered the only clear way forward.

In contrast to the Washington consensus, the Chinese reform model (sometimes described as the “Chinese consensus”) preserved a large, even dominant, role for the state in economic management. To some degree, this model reflects the policies of all the East Asian “tiger” economies – South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as well as China itself. In these countries, governments played a dominant role in directing and planning the economy and society, protected infant industries with tariffs, and invested generously in infrastructure, education, and social welfare. The Chinese model took the market driver very seriously, but insisted that political stability, careful planning, and the preservation of traditional social safety nets were equally important. And instead of “big bang” reforms, it introduced reforms more slowly and cautiously. The Chinese model was generally implemented more pragmatically, and was less driven by formal economic theory, so it adapted naturally to local historical and cultural traditions, and local traditions of governance. Many western economists treated the Chinese model with disdain, arguing that it was historically outdated, economically illiterate, and morally unacceptable. But early in the twenty-first century its strengths are easier to see. China’s rapid economic development since the 1980s has demonstrated the potential of such an approach to economic reform, though critics have argued that it pays little or no heed to democratization and human rights, and will eventually stifle growth.

### *SOME GENERAL TRENDS*

All the states created after the collapse of the Soviet Union had to find some balance between these approaches. Leaders in much of eastern Europe, and also in the Russian Federation, lurched violently towards market reforms, before making the many course corrections needed to balance market forces against local traditions and realities. Most of the PSIERS adopted a more cautious approach, closer to the Chinese model, and preserved many of the centralized political and economic structures of the Soviet era.

One crucial factor shaping the reform process was the extent of elite continuity. In 1991, as in 1260, elite continuity ensured that earlier habits of rule survived into the new era. In eastern Europe, there was considerable elite turnover. In the PSIERS, though, new leaders had mostly been formed within the Soviet *nomenklatura*, or at its margins. In the Russian Federation, an interview-based study of 1,800 individuals found that 78 percent of those in elite positions in 1993 had been members of the Communist Party in 1988, and at least 25 percent were children of the *nomenklatura*, while over 60 percent of members of the Soviet *nomenklatura* still held positions comparable to those they held in the late Soviet period.<sup>4</sup> And they brought their Soviet-era attitudes with them. Egor Ligachev, one of the more conservative members of Gorbachev’s Politburo, remained a communist after the collapse of the Soviet Union, helped found a revived Communist Party in 1993 after the 1991 ban on the Party was deemed unconstitutional, and was elected three times to the post-Soviet

parliament as a communist, until losing his seat in 2003. As the oldest member of the Duma he was, briefly, the “father of the house.”

As David Remnick puts it, in Russia the average former *apparatchik* “hardly left his chair.”<sup>5</sup> Gordon Hahn writes:

Russia’s revolution from above involved the mass co-optation and incorporation of the former Soviet party-state’s institutions and apparatchiks into the new regime. These institutions and bureaucrats constrained the consolidation of democracy and the market by bringing their authoritarian political culture and statist economic culture into the new regime and state, producing to date an illiberal executive-dominated and kleptocratic and oligarchical political economy.<sup>6</sup>

There was considerable elite continuity in most of the PSIERs. In 1997, seven heads of post-Soviet states had been First Secretaries of republican branches of the Communist Party, while for several years, meetings of heads of CIS member states looked remarkably like Politburo meetings of the late Soviet period.<sup>7</sup> In Kazakhstan, a 1995–1996 interview study concluded that almost 70 percent of the elite had held executive or Party positions in the late Soviet era. In the Kazakh regions, too, there was significant continuity. One regional governor (or *akim*) commented in an interview that, “My experience as head of this oblast in the eighties has served me very very well in my present job. I rely still almost exclusively on the contacts I had in that period.”<sup>8</sup> In Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, a former ideology secretary in the Ukrainian Party, emerged as leader after re-badging himself as a Ukrainian nationalist. In Belarus, former communist leaders survived until the 1994 elections, after which Aliaksandr Lukashenka, though not a high-ranking member of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, built a centralized system remarkably like that of the Soviet era, staffed largely by former members of the *nomenklatura*. In almost all of the Central Asian republics except for Kyrgyzstan, the new elites were dominated by former communist leaders, many with strong personal followings dating from the Soviet era, and anchored within regional clan networks. In none of the Central Asian republics were Soviet-era leaders challenged by strong pro-democracy movements.<sup>9</sup>

A high level of elite continuity was inevitable in the PSIERs because, in contrast to much of post-Soviet eastern Europe, there had not emerged coherent and powerful alternative elites. In Ukraine, as one contemporary put it:

power [had to] be given to someone. It is completely natural that it should fall into the hands of the *nomenklatura*. We simply did not ... have any other social and political milieu which is sufficiently advanced in both quantity and quality, and therefore capable of building a state.<sup>10</sup>

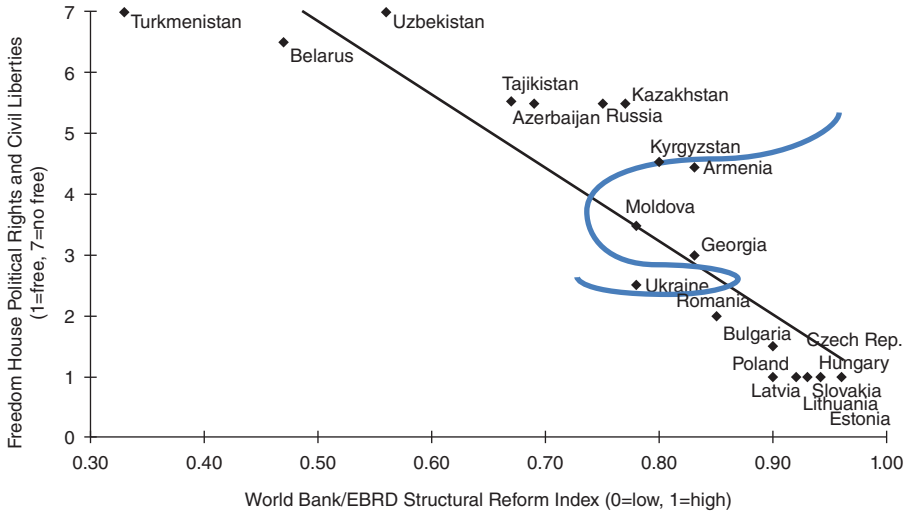
Continuity in the political culture of PSIER elites was matched by continuity in popular attitudes. This was very different from the Baltic republics and eastern Europe, where Soviet rule had been imposed on societies with distinctive political and historical traditions. In most of the PSIERs, many, even within the liberal intelligentsia, preserved a Hobbesian respect for strong state

structures. In March 1991, Gorbachev held a Soviet-wide referendum on the future of the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> All republics of the Union took part, 80 percent of the population voted, and 76.4 percent voted to preserve the Union. Support was strongest in rural areas and Central Asia, and weaker in the large cities. Nine months after Gorbachev's poll, the Union had run aground, and moods changed, but a widespread nostalgia for the strong government of the Soviet era persisted, nevertheless. In Russia, though the Communist Party was banned in August 1991, former communists were not excluded from politics, and after the ban on the Party was declared unconstitutional in 1993, the revived KPRF or Communist Party of the Russian Federation performed well in elections. When polled in 1995, most Russians agreed that things would have been "better if everything had stayed as it was in 1985."<sup>12</sup> The stability and security of the "era of stagnation" looked increasingly attractive in the rear-view mirror of societies in economic free-fall.

Continuity in elite membership and popular political attitudes limited the break with past political traditions and methods in most of the PSIERs. As the formal structures of the old order crumbled, many of its informal structures, habits of mind, networks, and methods of administration and rule survived. Hardly any leaders of the PSIERs were committed democrats or free marketeers, and many came from the generation of *nomenklatura* politicians that had consolidated their power under Brezhnev, and lacked enthusiasm for *perestroika*. As formal structures broke down, such informal attitudes acquired great significance.<sup>13</sup> The cultural momentum of old traditions of mobilization and elite cohesion helps explain why all the PSIERs would return within a few years to relatively centralized strategies of political and economic management.

The importance of elite continuity is shown by the example of the one PSIER in which there was considerable elite turnover. This was Mongolia, and Mongolia's fate in the 1990s was quite distinctive. By the end of the 1990s Mongolia had a highly marketized economy, and was generally classified as democratic and "free." It was also much more open to international influences than any of the other PSIERs. True, Mongolia had also been less integrated into the Soviet economy than the other PSIERs, but all the same, its very different trajectory shows, as does the history of other countries, such as South Korea, that there was nothing impossible about the idea of a rapid transition from an authoritarian and largely planned economy to a market economy with relatively democratic political structures.

In most of the other PSIERs, elite continuity ensured the survival of traditional attitudes to revenue raising and mobilization, as well as to governance. In the 1990s, much revenue generation looked more like tribute-taking – like the Muscovite practices of *kormlenie* ("feeding") or *iasak* – rather than the generation of capitalist profits. Modern economics defines such methods as "rent-seeking." There are highly technical definitions of rent-seeking, but, as in Chapter 16, we can define it simply as "a search for financial benefits from state help or state protection against competition rather than from improving efficiency."<sup>14</sup> While regarded as a legitimate activity in traditional mobilizational systems (it is essentially the same as tribute-taking), within capitalist societies rent-seeking looks archaic, inefficient, exploitative, and illegitimate.



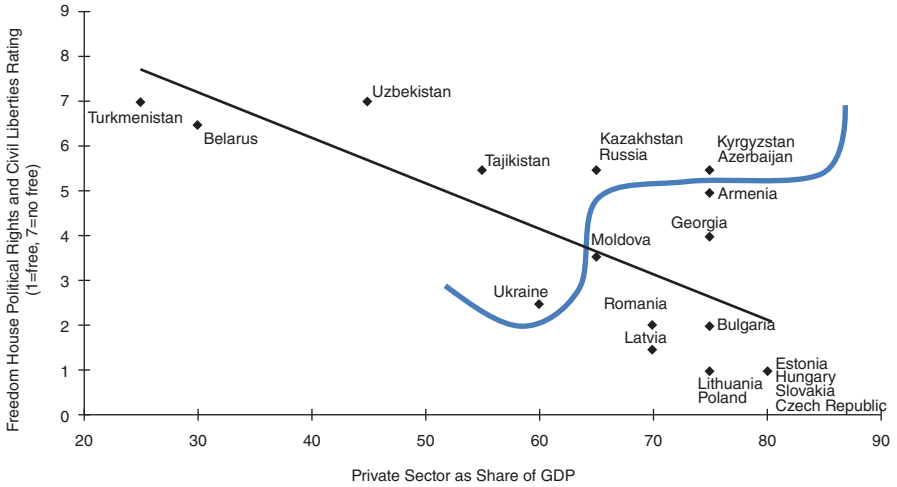
**Figure 18.1** Democracy and market reform in the PSIERS: the curved line separates PSIERS from other post-Soviet states. Based on Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 246. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

Nevertheless, many post-Soviet officials and entrepreneurs persisted with such methods because they understood them. In November 1994, just as he turned away from radical market reforms, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the newly elected President of Belarus, asked on live TV, “Do you know what a market economy is, can you work in market conditions?” When his audience answered, “No,” he continued, “And do you know what a planned economy is?” When his audience answered, “Yes,” he remarked, “Right, we will build what we know.”<sup>15</sup>

The contrast in methods of governance between the PSIERS and other post-Soviet polities is apparent from Figure 18.1, which is based on crude measures of democratization and marketization in 2005.<sup>16</sup> According to these measures, the least democratic countries in 2005 (those above 4 on the “y” axis) were all PSIERS, with the exception of Armenia, which had also been part of the Soviet Union. The one PSIER with a better rating for democratic governance was Ukraine, whose western provinces had never belonged to Inner Eurasia, and whose democracy remained fragile and contested. The PSIERS were also laggards in market reforms, according to the World Bank’s index of structural economic reform. Figure 18.2 shows that, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, the PSIERS were also slower to privatize state assets.

The twin challenges of political and economic reform were closely linked, but it may help to consider them separately because this can help explain why, in most of the PSIERS, the task of state building trumped the task of building modern market economies.





**Figure 18.2** Democracy and privatization in the PSIERS: the curved line separates PSIERS from other post-Soviet states. Based on Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 192. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

### POLITICAL CHALLENGES

The collapse of Soviet-era borders, ideologies, and structures of legitimation forced a new generation of leaders to look for new forms of legitimacy and elite cohesion. None sought legitimation through Marxist ideology, even though most were former communists. However, the democratic rhetoric of the *perestroika* era, and the need to seek broad popular support after the collapse of older political structures, forced new leaders, whatever their own preferences, to seek legitimacy in three main ways: as democrats, as pro-marketeters, and as nationalists. Few had deep commitments to these goals so they moved towards them cautiously and sometimes grudgingly. Most would build “managed democracies,” with formally democratic structures controlled through electoral manipulation and government-managed mass media. They would also make grudging concessions to market forces. But the most congenial way of building support and legitimacy was through new forms of nationalism. Yet even this could be a tricky maneuver, given the artificial borders and the complex ethnic mixture of many PSIERS. Building new forms of elite cohesion was also a complex and messy process. In the new era, it depended on permissive attitudes to profit-making and rent-taking, and the preservation of traditional political networks and ties, many of them built in the Soviet era.

In all the PSIERS, political legitimacy meant building modern nation-states. But, with the exception of Mongolia, few of the Soviet-era republican borders coincided neatly with ethnic borders. Nevertheless, all the new leaders understood that they would have to live with Soviet-era borders because trying to renegotiate them could lead quickly to dangerous military conflicts. If they needed any reminder of these, it was provided by the bloody five-year civil war in Yugoslavia after 1991. That showed what could have happened on a much

larger scale in the former USSR, with nuclear weapons thrown in for good measure. There were border wars in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and in Chechnya and Tajikistan. But in the 1990s there were no wars over the large Russian diasporas within the borders of Ukraine or the Baltic republics or Kazakhstan. Elite continuity played a role in this relatively peaceful transition because, despite the many centrifugal forces in play, most leaders of the PSIERs shared a common political culture and felt themselves to be more or less on the same team.

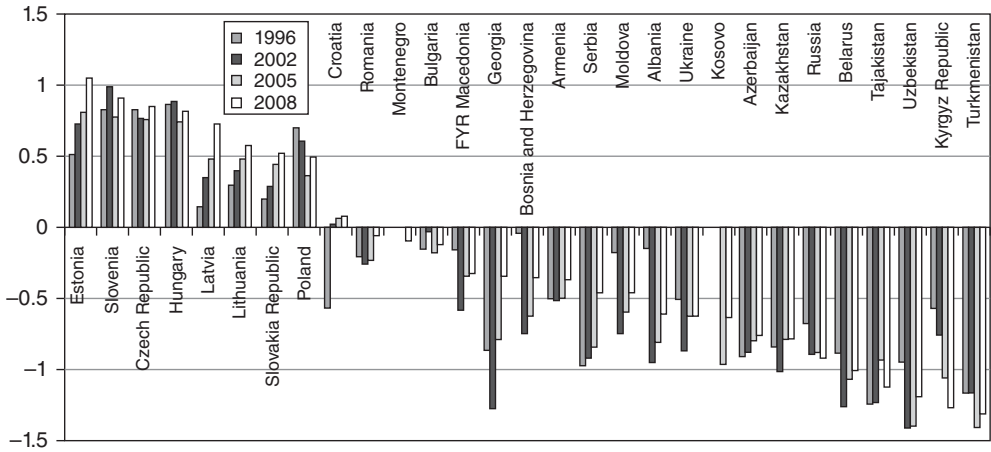
The primary task of all the new leaders, one faced by many former colonies in the twentieth century, was to build new power structures and new forms of legitimacy within borders that sometimes made little sense. Outside the Russian Federation and Mongolia, both of which inherited powerful national traditions, these tasks were so complex that they trumped the two other challenges of democratization and market reform.

With so many centrifugal forces at work, the first task was to prevent unraveling below the republican level. The breakdown of Soviet mechanisms of control, including the Communist Party itself, weakened links between the center and the regions. This was particularly dangerous where there were significant ethnic differences. At the edges of Inner Eurasia, in Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan, internal revolts were driven largely by ethnic and cultural tensions between new republican rulers and groups that did not fit easily into emerging national templates. The rulers of Ukraine and Kazakhstan, the largest of the new republics outside the Russian Federation, had to tread carefully to avoid igniting irredentist movements among their large Russian populations. All new leaders had to try to build a new *vertikal*' of power that could bind regions to centers.

Both ethnic and political tensions had to be managed within the formally democratic parliamentary structures inherited from the Soviet era. But Soviet traditions, with their carefully managed parliaments, elections, judicial systems, and media, also showed how to use democratic structures as a form of legitimation, without letting them constrain central power. Figure 18.3 uses 2008 World Bank data to assess confidence in the rule of law in 29 post-Soviet republics. It uses expert evaluations of property rights, contract enforcement, confidence in the police and courts, and the pervasiveness of crime and violence. The PSIERs occupy 9 of the last 10 places, in a striking demonstration of the extent to which their leaders managed to remain above the law.

## ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

In most of the PSIERs except Russia, where there already existed a strong national tradition, and economic reforms had been debated at great length in the era of *perestroika*, the challenge of state building overshadowed the task of economic reform. Instead of systematic economic reform we see in most of the PSIERs grudging and ad hoc reactions to a new, capitalist environment in which market forces could no longer be ignored. Reforms in the Russian Federation, the demands of international agencies such as the IMF, and the pressures of international markets all required adaptation to market forces.

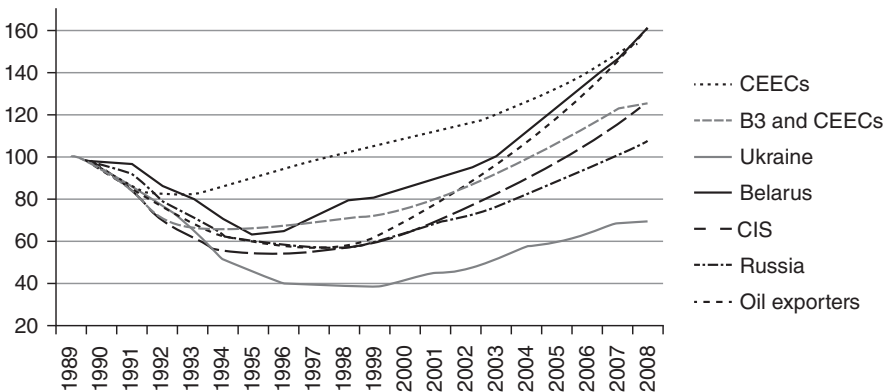


**Figure 18.3** The rule of law in post-Soviet countries: World Bank data on confidence in the rule of law, based on expert assessments, and focusing mainly on property rights, contract enforcement, the police and courts, and the pervasiveness of crime and violence. Based on Myant and Drahekoupil, *Transition Economies*, 136. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

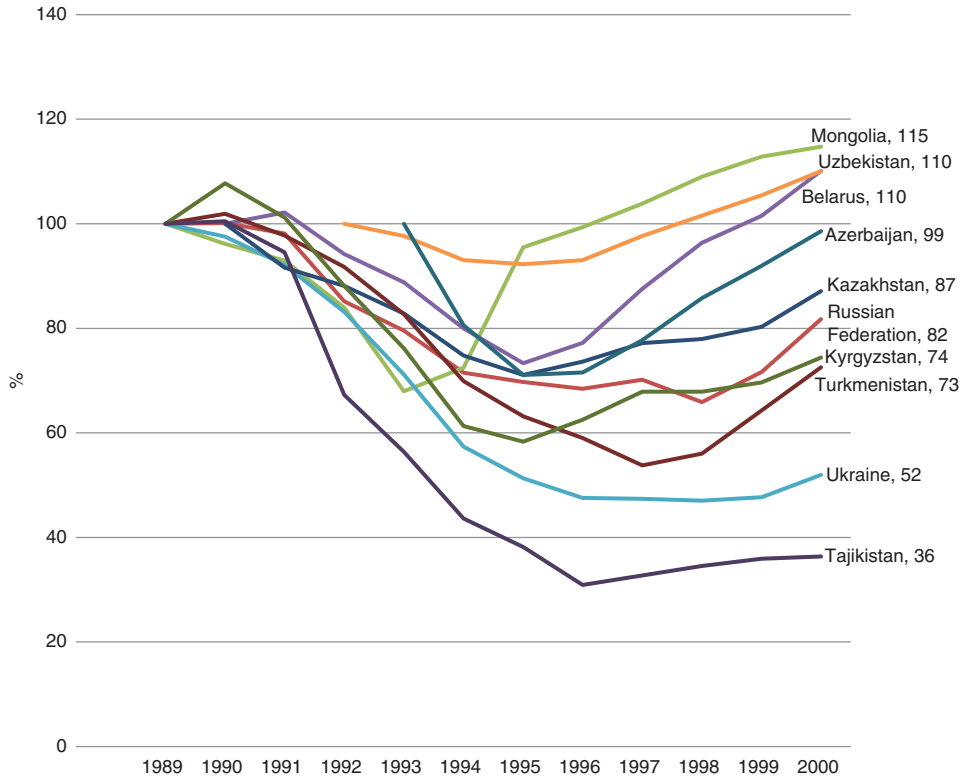
The new republics also had to deal with the severe economic consequences of the breakup of the Soviet Union, which cut long-established supply chains.

Four general economic trends are worth highlighting: (1) changes in total output; (2) the role of resource exports; (3) changes in levels of marketization; and (4) increasing inequality.

Estimates of economic output per capita in all post-Soviet states show a period of sharp economic decline followed by a period of recovery in the late 1990s. As Figure 18.4 shows, the fall was generally steeper in the PSIERS than



**Figure 18.4** GDP as % of 1989 level in post-Soviet countries. CEEC = Central–Eastern European Countries; SEEC = South-Eastern European Countries; B3 = Baltic republics; CIS = Commonwealth of Independent States (most former Soviet republics, excluding Baltic republics). Based on Myant and Drahekoupil, *Transition Economies*, 50. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.



**Figure 18.5** GNI per capita as % of 1989 level, 1989–2000. Based on Myant and Drahekoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

in the Baltic republics and central and eastern Europe, and the upturn came later in the 1990s. However, in the first decade of the twentieth century, economic growth in some of the PSIERs, particularly those with large resource sectors, matched, and sometimes exceeded, output growth in the other post-Soviet republics.

Figure 18.5, which is based on data from the World Bank (shown in Table 18.1) gives changing gross national income (GNI) per capita for the PSIERs between 1989 and 2000. Though such statistics provide an extremely crude sketch of complex changes, they do have important stories to tell. First, the decline was universal in the first half of the 1990s. In all post-Soviet republics, the sharp decline was caused by the breakdown of Soviet-era planning mechanisms before the emergence of robust market economies. In the PSIERs, per capita output fell to between 55 percent and 80 percent of the 1989 level. (Data for Uzbekistan flatter its performance because the base year is 1992, when output had already fallen.) In Ukraine and Tajikistan, output fell well below 50 percent. Output was generally lowest between 1994 and 1997, after which it began to rise, but only in Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Belarus did output per

**Table 18.1** GNIs of PSIERs, 1989–2008, taking 1989 as base

Country	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Russian Federation	100	100	98	85	80	72	70	68	70	66	72	82	89	95	103	116	127	141	158	172
Mongolia	100	96	93	84	68	72	96	99	104	109	113	115	121	126	136	153	162	180	203	223
Belarus	100	102	94	94	89	80	73	77	88	96	102	110	118	128	140	162	184	209	232	261
Ukraine	100	98	92	83	71	57	51	48	47	47	48	52	60	65	73	85	90	100	112	118
Uzbekistan				100	98	93	92	93	98	102	105	110	116	122	128	142	155	170	188	206
Kazakhstan				100	88	83	75	71	74	77	78	80	87	103	116	128	141	153	170	189
Turkmenistan	100	102	98	92	83	70	63	59	54	56	64	73	91	106	127	150	164	187	212	233
Kyrgyzstan	100	108	101	88	76	61	58	63	68	68	70	74	82	82	89	96	99	107	118	127
Tajikistan	100	100	95	67	56	44	38	31	33	35	36	36	43	47	52	60	65	70	77	85
Azerbaijan					100	81	71	72	78	86	92	99	110	122	138	152	187	255	314	368

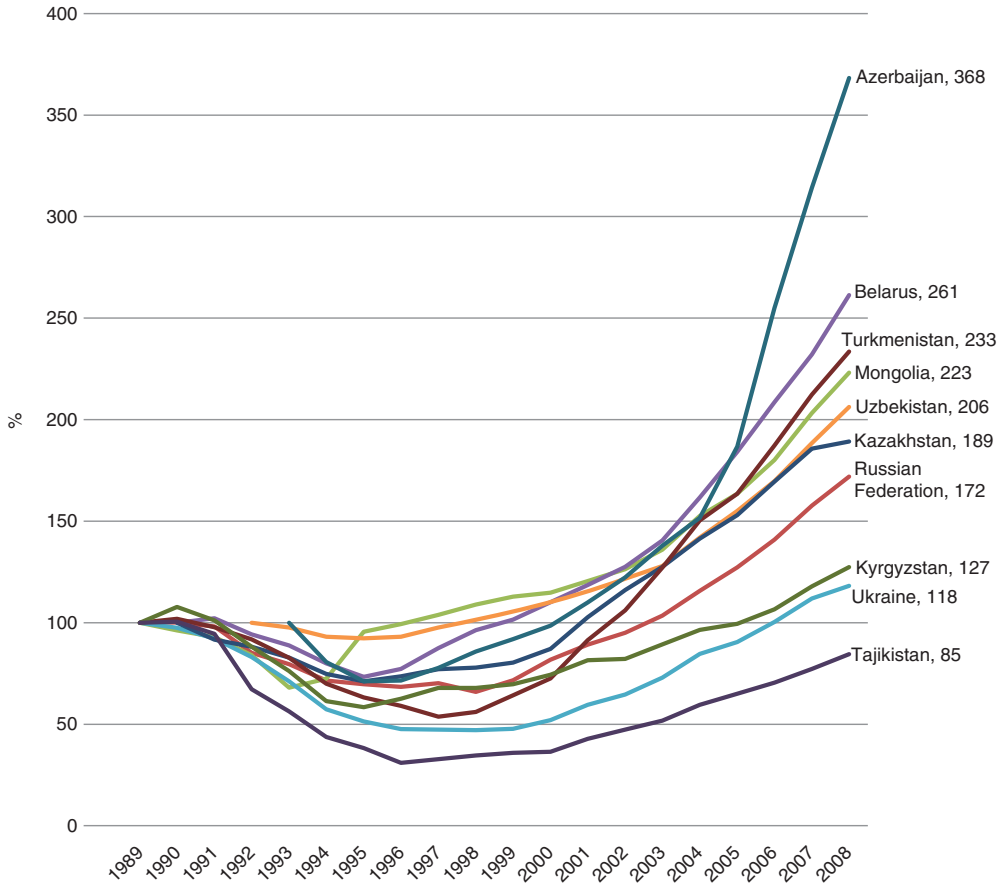
Source: Based on Myant and Drakhokupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

capita exceed the 1989 level by 2000. Mongolia is exceptional in that the collapse ended early, in 1994, and was followed by rapid recovery. In Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation, output had reached 80 percent of the 1989 level by 2000, and in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, it had reached 70 percent. In both Ukraine (where it had reached only about 50 percent) and Tajikistan (about 35 percent), the recovery had barely started before 2000.

These figures suggest that recovery depended less on the extent of market reforms than on the maintenance of strong, stable state structures. The eventual recovery was rapid in several countries where economic reforms stalled, but there was no political breakdown, including Uzbekistan, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. The recovery was weakest in Tajikistan (which broke down in civil war), and in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (in both of which political divisions weakened the state, and made it difficult to introduce coherent economic policies). Mongolia is exceptional because here market reforms were introduced more enthusiastically than in any of the PSIERs, and by a relatively stable and democratic state, and the recovery came exceptionally fast. At the other extreme, Turkmenistan provides another exception to the general rule. Here, there was little political or economic reform, and no political breakdown, but recovery was slow. That may be a hint that even the Chinese reform model required taking market forces seriously. Turkmenistan in the 1990s, like the Soviet Union in the 1970s, still relied primarily on resource revenues (from oil and gas); as late as 2010, only about 25 percent of Turkmenistan's economy was privatized.<sup>17</sup>

A second important trend, which becomes apparent after 2000, is the close relationship between economic recovery and resource exports. Resource exports offered one of the quickest paths to recovery, and a simple and effective way of entering world markets with limited restructuring of enterprises or the national economy.<sup>18</sup> But this strategy depended on having goods such as oil and gas that could be sold profitably on international markets. Among the PSIERs, the four major oil and gas exporters were Russia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. In all four, the beginning of recovery coincides with an upturn in global oil prices from 1998, combined with a sharp fall in the value of most PSIER currencies after the 1998 financial crisis. Increasing resource exports help explain why some of the steepest increases in economic growth in the first decade of the twenty-first century were in countries that undertook the least political and economic reform, in Azerbaijan (whose GNI per capita in 2008 was 368 percent of the 1989 level), and in Turkmenistan (233 percent), followed by Kazakhstan (189 percent). (See Figure 18.6.) Russia, too, relied increasingly on resource rents. A recent estimate suggests that by 2008, Russian Federation rents from oil and gas rose from under \$100 billion in 1998 to, respectively, \$300 billion and \$600 billion in 2008.<sup>19</sup> Rents on such a colossal scale reduced the pressure for market reforms in all the PSIERs with significant exportable resources. But such high rents are unlikely to persist, which will eventually pose fundamental challenges to economies that have allowed resource wealth to postpone the task of economic reform.<sup>20</sup>

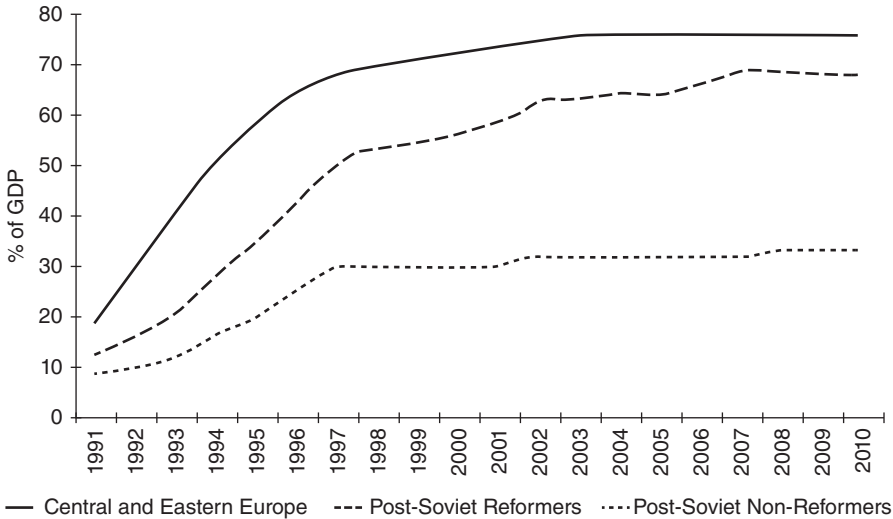
The third large economic trend, in levels and rates of market reform, suggests some reasons for differences in the rate and timing of economic decline



**Figure 18.6** GNI per capita as % of 1989 level, 1989–2008. Based on Myant and Drahekoupil, *Transition Economies*, With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

and recovery. Figure 18.7 provides a rough comparison of levels of privatization, while Figure 18.2 above compares levels of privatization and democratization in 2010. Figure 18.7 shows that the PSIERs privatized later and with less enthusiasm than the countries of central and eastern Europe, in many of which the private sector accounted for almost 70 percent of GDP by the late 1990s. Figure 18.7 also shows that the PSIERs themselves fall into two very different groups. All the PSIERs privatized some industries in the first half of the 1990s, but in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus, privatization had stalled at under 30 percent of GDP by the mid-1990s, while in the other PSIERs, average levels of privatization had reached about 50 percent by the mid-1990s, and would continue to rise slowly for the next decade and a half, to about 60 percent.

Table 18.2 gives the dates at which different countries achieved benchmark levels of price liberalization and trade liberalization. Countries are ranked in descending order, according to the year in which each country reached a score



**Figure 18.7** Private sector as share of GDP in different groups of post-Soviet societies: the “non-reformers” among the PSIERS were Turkmenistan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan. Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 191. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

of 4 for price liberalization (the level at which only a small number of administered prices remain). The second column gives the date at which each country achieved a level of 4 for trade liberalization; here, a level of 4 indicates the removal of all major restrictions on imports and exports (apart from agriculture), and of most export tariffs, as well as low levels of government involvement in imports and exports and a convertible currency.

Table 18.2 shows that the PSIERS were much slower than most eastern European and Baltic countries to liberalize prices and trade. Most eastern European and Baltic countries had reached a level of 4 on the index of price and trade liberalization by the middle of the 1990s. But with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, most PSIERS achieved level 4 for price liberalization only in the second half of the 1990s. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan had not achieved this level even in 2008, while Belarus reached level 4 in 1997, but then fell back to lower levels. The PSIERS lagged even further on measures of trade liberalization. While many reached level 4 in the 1990s, Ukraine and Azerbaijan did not do so until the first decade of the twenty-first century, and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan had still not reached that level in 2008.

Despite the arguments of the Washington consensus, these graphs show no automatic link between market reform and overall economic growth in the PSIERS. Neither Belarus nor Uzbekistan committed to serious market reforms, but the economic decline ended earlier in these countries (by the middle of the 1990s), whereas in Russia and Ukraine, which committed more decisively to market reform, it ended only after the 1998 crash. Figure 18.6, which gives



**Table 18.2** Years when transition economies reached EBRD scores of 4 for price liberalization and liberalization of foreign exchange and trade

Country	Price liberalization	Foreign exchange and trade liberalization
Hungary	1990	1991
Bulgaria	1991	1994
Czech Republic	1991	1992
Slovak Republic	1991	1992
Croatia	1992	1994
Latvia	1992	1994
Macedonia, FYR	1992	1994
Poland	1992	1993
Estonia	1993	1994
Lithuania	1993	1994
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>
Romania	1994	1994
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Armenia	1996	1996
Georgia	1996	1997
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Belarus<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>1997</b>	
<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2008</b>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1998	2008
Slovenia	1999	1993
Albania	2000	1992
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1996</b>
Montenegro	2001	2007
Serbia	2001	2009
Moldova	2005	1995
<b>Tajikistan</b>		
<b>Turkmenistan</b>		
<b>Uzbekistan</b>		

EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. PSIERs are in bold.

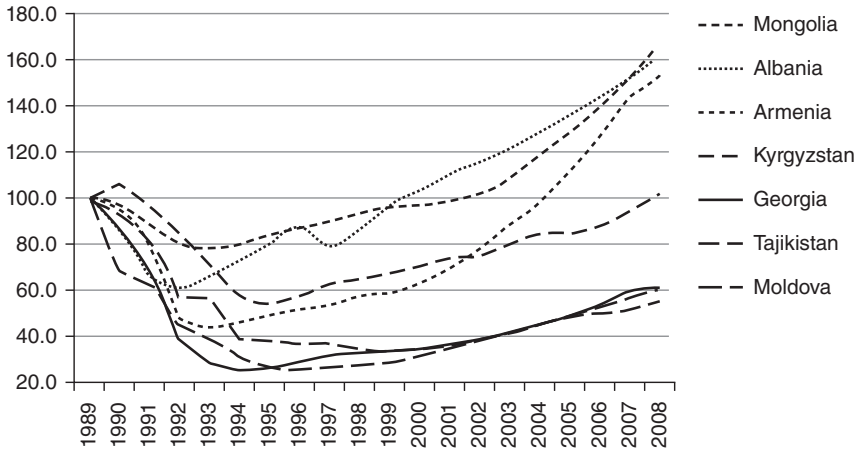
Ranked in descending order by year in which each country reached score of 4 for price liberalization. A score of 4 for price liberalization indicates that only a small number of administered prices remain. A score of 4 for foreign exchange and trade liberalization indicates the removal of all quantitative and administrative import and export restrictions (apart from agriculture) and all significant export tariffs, insignificant direct involvement in exports and imports by ministries and state-owned trading companies, no major non-uniformity of customs duties for non-agricultural goods and services, and full and current account convertibility.

<sup>a</sup>Note that Belarus reached a score of 4 for price liberalization in 1997, but then dropped.

Source: Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, Table 5.1, 103. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons. EBRD transition indicators available at <http://www.ebrd.com/country/sector/econo/stats/timeth.htm>

figures on output up to 2008, shows that output per capita continued to rise fast in Belarus and Uzbekistan, despite the absence of serious market reforms, while it rose much more slowly in Russia, and in Ukraine it had barely returned to 1989 levels by 2008. Mongolia is the only PSIER that seems to show a simple correlation between market reforms and economic growth.

Nor is there clear evidence for a correlation between economic growth and levels of democratization. Recovery was slow in both Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, yet Figures 18.1 and 18.2 (above) suggest that these were among the most democratic of the PSIERs in 2005. Output recovered much faster in



**Figure 18.8** Changing GDP in poorer post-Soviet countries as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 52. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

Turkmenistan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan, which were the least democratic of the PSIERS according to these charts.

All in all, the degree of institutional breakdown may have had a greater impact on economic production than the degree of market reform or democratization.<sup>21</sup> Countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus preserved many of the institutional structures of the Soviet era; institutional changes were greater in countries such as Russia and Ukraine; while institutions broke down almost entirely in some countries that suffered civil wars. Figure 18.8 suggests that post-Soviet republics such as Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan, all of which endured periods of civil war, had the slowest economic recoveries. The other country in which recovery was slow was Kyrgyzstan; here there was considerable early reform, but also significant political instability.

The fourth large economic trend, which is obscured by figures on national economic output, is a sharp and universal rise in inequality. Though there was significant inequality in power and access to wealth in Soviet societies, material inequalities were limited because the wealthy could not *own* significant assets (even if they could control them), while at the lower end of the scale, most people enjoyed high levels of job security, an extensive welfare net, and subsidized prices for basic goods, including rents and heating.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, inequality and poverty increased sharply in all post-Soviet republics. The World Bank estimated that between 1988 and 1998, the number of people living on less than \$2.50 a day in all post-Soviet republics rose from about 2 percent to 21 percent. The numbers living in dire poverty rose fast as unemployment increased, subsidies were cut on rents, heating, and basic foodstuffs, and inflation slashed the real value of wages and pensions. In Russia, average real wages in August 1998 (at the height of that year's financial crisis) were a third of the level for late 1991.<sup>22</sup>

Gini coefficients provide a crude measure of income inequality. They range between 0 (perfect equality) and 100 (perfect inequality, an economy in which one individual owns everything). In 1988–1989, according to World Bank data, the Gini coefficients for all Soviet-bloc countries fell within a range from 19 to 27; 10 years later, all had risen above 26, but the highest rates were in some of the PSIERs, particularly in the mid-1990s, after which the coefficients fell slightly. Nevertheless, in Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Gini coefficients had risen above 40 by 2000, equaling the highest levels in major industrialized countries such as the USA. In Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan they had also risen to the mid-30s. (Table 18.3a, b and Figure 18.9.)

Measures of changing income levels can be deceptive, mainly because in the Soviet era and to some extent even in the 1990s, incomes were not the best measure of access to resources. Particularly in the PSIERs, many loss-making enterprises continued to receive subsidies, so that, even if wages fell or were not paid for long periods, employment rates did not fall as fast as in eastern Europe, and housing and basic supplies were protected for many workers. Barter also protected living standards for many in the 1990s. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that levels of inequality rose extremely fast, and millions of people who would have been protected from extreme poverty in the Soviet era lost that protection. Rising inequality helps explain the persistent nostalgia for Soviet times in all the PSIERs.

## *THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: A DIMINISHED HEARTLAND*

The large trends considered in the previous section will help make sense of the different histories of the various PSIERs. The rest of this chapter will describe the rebuilding process in the Russian Federation.

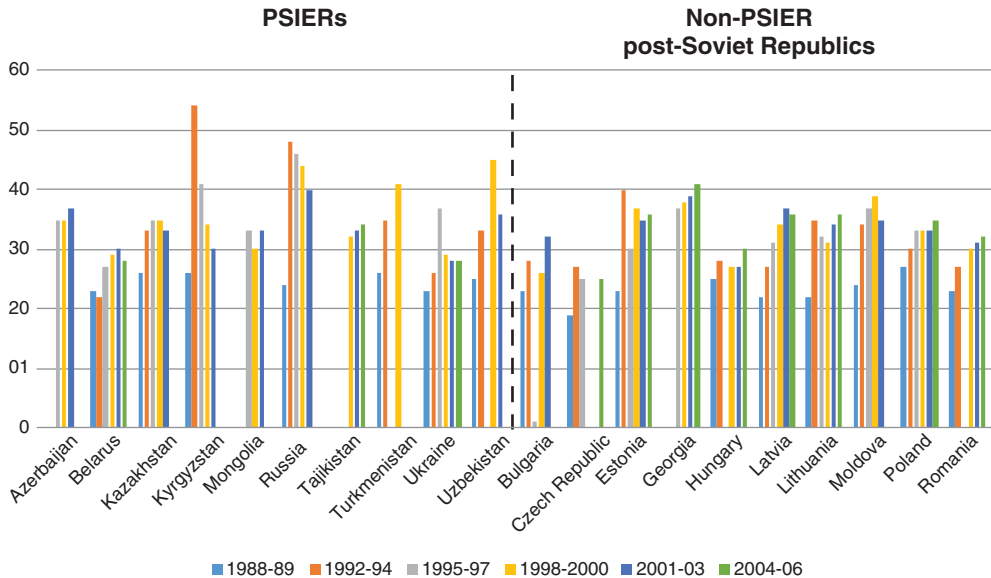
Though diminished in size, wealth, and global influence, the Russian Federation dwarfed all the other PSIERs (Map 18.1). Its size, economic weight, and close connections with the former Soviet bloc and the old imperial heartland ensured that it would continue to act as Inner Eurasia's heartland power. However, particularly in Mongolia and Central Asia, it had to share that role with a resurgent China.

Russia was the heir to Russian national traditions, so that building new forms of legitimacy was a less difficult and less urgent task than in the other PSIERs, though Russia did have to deal with the painful challenge of giving up its status as a superpower. Like all the PSIERs, Russia abandoned Marxism as a legitimizing ideology. In its place Russia's new leaders adopted a pragmatic combination of Russian orthodoxy (with church leaders playing a prominent role in state rituals), Russian nationalism, and nostalgia for the Soviet past. Immediately after the Soviet collapse, the primary tasks were to build a market-based economy and new institutional structures. Because the intense reform debates of the *perestroika* era had mostly taken place in Russia, this was the only PSIER whose leaders entered the post-Soviet era with relatively coherent ideas about

**Table 18.3a, b** Gini coefficients for selected post-Soviet republics, 1988–2006

(a)												
Year	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Mongolia	Russia	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Ukraine	Uzbekistan		
1988–1989		23	26	26		24		26	23	25		
1992–1994		22	33	54		48		35	26	33		
1995–1997	35	27	35	41	33	46			37			
1998–2000	35	29	35	34	30	44	32	41	29	45		
2001–2003	37	30	33	30	33	40	33		28	36		
2004–2006		28					34		28			
(b)												
Year	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Moldova	Poland	Romania		
1988–1989	23	19	23		25	22	22	24	27	23		
1992–1994	28	27	40		28	27	35	34	30	27		
1995–1997	1	25	30	37		31	32	37	33			
1998–2000	26		37	38	27	34	31	39	33	30		
2001–2003	32		35	39	27	37	34	35	33	31		
2004–2006		25	36	41	30	36	36		35	32		

Source: Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economics*, 349, based on World Bank figures. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons.



**Figure 18.9** Gini coefficients for selected post-Soviet republics, 1988–2006. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 349, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

reform. Only in Moscow did the reform debates generate real momentum for reform, and only here did the new leader (Boris Yeltsin) owe his position to his advocacy of reform.

### 1992–1995: THE ERA OF REFORM

Plans for a rapid transition to a market economy were already in the air in 1990. Polish reforms offered an influential model, supported strongly by advocates of the “Washington consensus.” There were both political and economic arguments for moving fast. Shock therapy promised a quick transition to “normality.” Reformers hoped that rapid reforms would create viable market economies before opponents could mobilize to block reform or build powerful rent-extracting empires. Reformers also hoped that a quick transition would limit the pain. After a short, sharp shock, they argued, markets would revive, and benefits would start “trickling down” to the population.

Poland led the way in January 1990. Under the Balcerowicz program, most prices were liberalized, the currency was devalued, and controls on imports were removed. The pain was immediate. Prices doubled within a month, while wages fell by almost 40 percent and total production by a similar proportion.<sup>23</sup> In Russia, in mid-1990, a group of pro-market economists including Stanislav Shatalin and Grigorii Yavlinskii proposed a similar program, the “500-Day” Plan. In November 1991, the Russian parliament granted Yeltsin the right to rule by decree, and he used these powers to launch radical market reforms

early in 1992, relying on his prestige as Russia's first elected leader and the most visible opponent of the August 1991 coup.

The dramatic simplicity of shock therapy was very much in Yeltsin's style. He is supposed to have approved of the 1990 "500-Day" reform plan without reading a word of it, impressed by its "zippy title and taut timetable."<sup>24</sup> He launched the 1992 reforms with the support of a group of radical young economists, of whom the best known was Egor Gaidar (1956–2009), a Soviet-trained economist who had taken to Friedmanite economic theory with a convert's zeal.

Gaidar saw shock therapy as a necessary evil to prevent the greater evil of total breakdown followed, perhaps, by a civil war as bloody as that of 1918–1921. After his death, the *Economist* commented:

By the winter of [1991] Russia had two months' worth of grain left, and producers were refusing to sell their crops to the state at regulated prices. Shops were empty. There was no money to import food, either: foreign-exchange reserves stood at \$27m and the country's foreign debt, inherited from the Soviet Union, was \$72 billion. The only option for Mr Gaidar and his team was to abolish price regulation and allow free trade.<sup>25</sup>

In November 1991, Yeltsin told Russia's Supreme Soviet that "The time has come to act decisively, firmly, without hesitation ... A big reformist breakthrough is necessary."<sup>26</sup> Yeltsin argued for rapid price liberalization (which would mean sharp price rises); stabilization of the currency and a balanced budget (which would threaten jobs in heavily subsidized industries, and cut welfare payments); and rapid privatization (a complex process for which there were no good precedents). Privatization would be managed by another young pro-market economist, Anatolii Chubais. Yeltsin promised that the pain would be brief. "Everyone will find life harder for approximately six months, then prices will fall and goods will begin to fill the market. By the autumn of 1992 the economy will have stabilized."<sup>27</sup>

In November and December of 1991, the government began issuing the relevant reform decrees. One provided for the deregulation of 80 percent of producer prices and 90 percent of consumer prices. Energy prices and transportation prices were excluded, as were some basic foodstuffs such as bread (and vodka), at least for a few months.<sup>28</sup> Another decree removed most limitations on the right to trade and to import goods from abroad.

The reforms were introduced on January 2, 1992. To the surprise of many, there was little resistance, despite the fact that prices rose by 250 percent within a day. Inflation cut real wages, erased savings, and destroyed the real value of pensions for millions. Consumers were partially compensated by the disappearance of queues and the reappearance of goods that had not been available for years, including fresh fruit. Removing many subsidies and cutting the military budget by 70 percent eliminated most of the 1991 budget deficit, which had reached 30 percent of GDP.<sup>29</sup>

The reforms did not halt the decline in production or end inflation. Inflation was caused, in part, because banking systems were chaotic, ill-regulated, and

poorly adapted for a market economy. Cooperative banks operated with little regulation and many were linked to (and served the interests of) particular enterprises. Soviet-era politicians ran the central bank and insisted on printing money to keep essential enterprises afloat, to maintain living standards, and to preserve something of the traditional welfare net. Meanwhile, the republican banks of all the other PSIERs continued to print Soviet rubles, so no single government controlled monetary supply. Kyrgyzstan was the first republic to establish an independent currency, in May 1993. In July 1993, the conservative Russian Minister of Finance, Viktor Geraschenko, who had hitherto supported massive subsidies, suddenly declared all Soviet-era bank notes null. This simple measure broke up the common ruble zone, forcing each republic to create its own national currency within just a few months. In principle, at least, inflation could now be tackled separately in each new currency zone.<sup>30</sup>

Reformers argued that rapid privatization was essential to lock in the reforms. Selling state assets would block a return to the command economy, and allow the formation of new, independent businesses, run and owned by a new class of independent entrepreneurs. But privatization was a colossal and unprecedented challenge. How could you sell off most of the resources of the largest country in the world, and do so fairly, efficiently, and in ways that encouraged entrepreneurial activity? Privatization also had to be fast, because covert privatization had already begun under *perestroika*, as managers learnt how to extract rents by selling goods manufactured at subsidized prices through cooperatives charging market prices. In the 1990s, such practices came to be known as *prikhvatizatsiya*, a pun combining the ideas of privatization and robbery with violence (*prikhvat* means to grab). In October 1991, Yeltsin admitted that “Privatization in Russia has gone on for [a long time], but wildly, spontaneously, and often on a criminal basis.”<sup>31</sup> The task facing Anatolii Chubais was to formalize, regularize, legalize, and democratize the sale of the assets of the largest country in the world.

The Privatization Program adopted in June 1992 was the last major reform in a hectic six-month period of transformation. Anatolii Chubais opted to privatize by issuing vouchers, nominally worth 10,000 rubles (worth *c.* US\$22 at the time) to every Russian citizen. These could be used at auctions to buy shares in companies, or they could be traded to others. Auctions began in December 1992 and continued until the middle of 1994. In 18 months, over 16,000 large enterprises, each with more than 1,000 workers, were privatized. Many were bought by their own workers, but banks and independent entrepreneurs soon bought up vouchers, and began concentrating control in their own hands. Over 100,000 smaller enterprises had also been sold to private owners, often their former managers. Private housing was, in effect, given to existing tenants. By the end of 1994, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) estimated that more than 50 percent of Russia’s GDP was produced in the private sector.<sup>32</sup>

In the rural sector, privatization was not a success, as few collective farmers were willing to risk going it alone. For all their inefficiency, collective farms, like Mongolian *negdels*, provided protection. They usually worked closely with local officials, and offered technological, medical, veterinary, and legal

services that no other institution could yet provide. Life outside them was tough.

In the abstract, if a collective farm is disbanded, what is left are the hundreds of households that subsist on their so-called “private plots.” The “private plot” is a shorthand for a small holding consisting usually of a house, a vegetable garden, a few livestock pigs and chickens, and rights to a hay meadow where fodder can be cut to sustain the animals over the long winters.<sup>33</sup>

No private plot had enough resources for a viable independent farm, particularly in an environment where relations with officials, carriers, and wholesalers were monopolized by collective or state farms. As a Buriat economist put it:

The collective farmers under socialism were subject to administrative serfdom. Today they are subject to economic serfdom. Their plots are too small to produce a surplus, and even if they succeeded, there is no public transport now and they cannot take produce to market on their backs. They have to rely on the collective farm to plough their land as they have no machines. That means they have no alternative but to bow to the farm leadership, to give their labor at any rate the boss will offer. The vast majority cannot even escape to the city – they don’t have the money to pay to get there.<sup>34</sup>

From 1993, farming was broadly privatized but collective and state farms survived in the new form of “corporate farms,” which were jointly owned by their members. Many continued to operate as in the past, but gradually the number of smaller individual farms also increased.

Despite their limitations, the economic changes were huge. In just a few years, the private sector, which had barely existed in the Soviet era, accounted for almost 70 percent of Russian GDP. This, argues Anders Aslund, an enthusiast for shock therapy, was “the most fundamental change brought about by the transition.”<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, flourishing competitive markets did not appear overnight. Production continued to fall throughout the 1990s, on a scale comparable to the capitalist Depression of the 1930s.<sup>36</sup> By 1995, Russia’s total GDP had fallen to about 60 percent of the 1990 level, and by 1998 to about 55 percent before it began rising again. Not until after 2000 did GDP return to the level of 1990, as underused plant and labor began producing again. After 2002, growth owed more to increasing productivity and new capital formation, as well as resource exports, but after the 2008 global financial crisis, Russia’s total GDP fell back to just above the 1990 level.<sup>37</sup>

Inflated Soviet output figures may have encouraged over-estimates of the extent of the decline in production, but figures on physical output show that the decline was real. By 1994, Russian steel production had fallen to 55 percent of 1990 levels, and even in 2003 it had returned to only 70 percent of that level. In Russia, as in most of the PSIERs, the economic collapse was greater than in eastern Europe.<sup>38</sup>

For ordinary Russians, the results were dire. According to a recent estimate, the number living below officially defined “poverty” levels rose from about 12



percent to about 34 percent (a third of the population) in 1992 alone. The number fell to about 22 percent by 1997, but returned to almost 30 percent during the 1998 crisis, before falling back to about 13 percent by 2010. Average real wages fell by a half between 1992 and 1998, reaching just 150 percent of the official poverty level.<sup>39</sup> All too often, wages were simply not paid in the 1990s, though subsidized enterprises protected the living standards of their workers by preserving their rights to accommodation and heating, and even, sometimes, by supplying goods in kind. In the 1990s, the subsidies supplied by enterprises may have equaled almost 10 percent of GDP. Subsidies were particularly important in the more than 400 Russian “monocities” with a single major employer.<sup>40</sup>

Poverty rates varied greatly between different regions of Russia, and were significantly higher in rural than in urban areas, while in towns, poverty rates were generally higher in smaller towns.<sup>41</sup> Government spending on health and pensions fell by between 30 percent and 50 percent between 1990 and 1995.<sup>42</sup> The decline in incomes and social welfare inevitably affected health. In 1992, death rates rose above birth rates, and since then the rate of natural increase of the Russian population has been negative.<sup>43</sup> By one estimate, life expectancy in Russia in 2005 was two years less than in the 1950s.<sup>44</sup> Levels of inequality, as defined by Gini coefficients, almost doubled between 1991 and 1993, rising from about 25 to 43, and reaching levels typical of the more unequal developed capitalist countries. They have stayed at these high levels ever since.<sup>45</sup>

The breakdown was particularly severe in regions such as Siberia where economic distortions had been most extreme under the command economy. Many enterprises and institutions, and sometimes entire cities, could no longer survive in a world of real market prices. There was widespread impoverishment as military bases closed and subsidies were cut for large enterprises. Without massive subsidies, two of the region’s most important sectors, forestry and fishing, turned out to be economically unsustainable.<sup>46</sup> By 1999, Siberian economic output had fallen to almost 40 percent of the level in 1990 and infant mortality in the early twenty-first century was twice as high as in Moscow. Many left the region. Between 1990 and 2009, Siberia’s population fell by 7 percent and that of the Far East by 20 percent. The population of Magadan fell by 60 percent. Populations increased only in the Tiumen’ region, which flourished after the discovery of huge reserves of natural gas. Siberia’s frontier capitalism also generated high levels of crime and corruption; in 2000 Siberian murder rates were three times higher than in Moscow.<sup>47</sup>

Given the social costs of Yeltsin’s reform program, it is not surprising that rising opposition soon brought it to a halt. Within months of its introduction, members of the Russian Supreme Soviet, which was still dominated by former members of the Communist Party, began demanding slower reform and the maintenance of generous government subsidies, even if this meant continued inflation. By the summer of 1992, a strong opposition coalition was emerging, dominated by former communists. Its members insisted on preserving the state’s traditional economic role, partly on the grounds that Russian traditions required a strong state, and partly because of the shocking costs of shock therapy, and fear of a slow slide into economic and political

anarchy. The opposition was led by Ruslan Khasbulatov, the Speaker of the Russian Supreme Soviet, and a Soviet-era economics professor. He was closely allied to Yeltsin's Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoi, a former fighter pilot. From the middle of 1992, the Supreme Soviet blocked further price liberalization. Similar divisions between market reformers (or "Westernizers") and supporters of more traditional strategies of rule and mobilization (often described as "statists" or "Slavophiles") would emerge in many of the PSIERs.

There were strong theoretical, political, and even ethical arguments against shock therapy. Subsidized prices for consumer goods and energy prevented a catastrophic decline in living standards and enabled many enterprises to keep functioning and supporting their workers with housing and supplies. The examples of Hungary and China also suggested that a slower, more carefully regulated process of marketization might work better than Polish-style shock therapy. Besides, many argued that building market economies was not just a matter of introducing universal economic principles and institutions, but required culturally appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, none of which could be created overnight despite the claims of neoliberal economists. Finally, most opponents of rapid reform admired the achievements of the Soviet-era command economies and wanted to preserve their most valuable features.

Reformers responded that it was vital to complete the reforms fast. Without serious privatization and price liberalization, the Russian economy would be left in a sort of economic limbo that limited competition, and allowed rent-takers to exploit artificial price differentials and stymie genuine market activity. As the experience of the NEP era had already suggested, an economy suspended half way between the market and the command economy could flourish in neither. The limits of price liberalization were already reducing pressure on enterprises to introduce efficient practices and technologies. And well-placed individuals were already making huge fortunes by acquiring goods and assets at subsidized state prices and selling them at market prices.

Reformers insisted that half-hearted reforms could only encourage corruption. And corruption was indeed flourishing in an environment where connections and bribes counted for more than innovation or efficient management, creating an entire class of rent-takers dominated by an uneasy alliance of officials from the Soviet *nomenklatura* and canny new entrepreneurs from the post-Soviet class of "oligarchs."

Holding the levers of industrial production in their hands and threatening the collapse of industry, managers were able to demand subsidized credits from the government. They received the credits, made money from government subsidies rather than profits in the market, and socked their money into Swiss bank accounts and foreign investments. In one notorious case, the president of Lukoil, who had no real assets in 1991, increased his worth to \$2.4 billion by 1995. In monopoly conditions managers set prices as they wished, further fueling inflation. Corruption, bribery, and criminality became part of the fabric of daily life in Russia. One report prepared for Yeltsin in January 1994 claimed that criminal mafias controlled in some fashion 70 to 80 percent of all business and banking.<sup>48</sup>

The so-called “Komsomol” economy provides a good example of these methods. The Soviet-era youth organization, the Komsomol, enjoyed high prestige and controlled large assets. During *perestroika*, institutions generally found it easier to trade than individuals, and Komsomol officials became adept at exploiting their power, often in partnership with young businessmen such as Mikhail Khodarkovskii, who would become one of the richest of the oligarchs.<sup>49</sup> Komsomol officials and their partners set up commercial banks and construction companies, and soon dominated entertainment, the video market, and tourism, earning massive revenues as they did so.<sup>50</sup>

Official connections mattered because officials had the power to license or to block new commercial ventures and to control the rules under which they operated. They could also determine the terms on which state property was sold. In some cases entire ministries were privatized, leaving their former ministers as major shareholders.<sup>51</sup> Many government officials, including Viktor Chernomyrdin, the founder of Gazprom, the former Ministry of the Gas Industry, became extremely wealthy in this way. The new generation of oligarchs mostly made their money in partnership with influential government officials.

Oligarchs built their business empires by making use of their links to state officials, allowing them to obtain various sources of income – including government subsidies, preferential access to foreign exchange, allocation of export quotas, and provision of preferential import tariffs – and also state property. Thus, they typically made their first millions through commodity trading, importing scarce goods or financing brokering.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, the government was losing its grip on the economy. After 1991, the oil industry was in such chaos that output almost halved, slashing both state and commercial revenues. Strikes by unpaid workers shut down entire oil fields, oil was stolen and sold illegally, enterprises in oil-producing regions set up as independent businesses. Often it was not clear who really owned the oil or the infrastructure needed to pump, refine, and transport it.<sup>53</sup> During the economic reforms, the government tried to take control of the industry so as to organize its eventual privatization. Three large oil companies were created: Lukoil, Yukos, and Surgut, each operating like most other large oil companies by linking exploration, production, refining, and marketing within a single organization, and each marked for slow privatization once it had managed to regain control over its many subordinate companies. But enforcing control was not easy, and sometimes involved local wars between officials, police, and gangs.

There was violence at every level, as Russian *mafias* – gangs, scarily tattooed veterans of prison camps, and petty criminals – ran protection rackets, stole crude oil and refined products, and sought to steal assets from local distribution terminals. As the gangs battled for control, a contract, all too often, referred not to a legal agreement but to a hired killing. In the oil towns, the competing gangs tried to take over whole swaths of the local economy – from the outdoor markets to the hotels and even the train stations.<sup>54</sup>

Similar battles for control occurred in other sectors of the economy, too, including the media. And the ever-closer symbiosis between officials and entrepreneurs began to generate fantastic levels of wealth. Courts could do little to prevent corruption given the absence of a strong tradition of judicial independence, low pay for judicial officials, which invited bribery, and the extreme difficulty of interpreting a rapidly changing and often contradictory body of commercial and criminal law. Indeed, with commercial law itself in a state of flux, it was impossible to engage in business of any kind without breaking some laws, and this exposed all entrepreneurs to blackmail. As trade took off, gangs offered “protection” to cafés, owners of market stalls and kiosks, and small shops in return for regular payments. Most gangs were organized under a “roof” or *krysha*, a powerful gangster or official who protected them in return for a share of their revenues. In 1993, a St. Petersburg gang with about 100 members lived well off the takings from 60 firms, including brothels. The gang assigned a “bull” to patrol markets at night, and the bull expected to graze on the market’s produce and services.<sup>55</sup> In the 1990s, most entrepreneurs needed a roof, but in the late 1990s levels of criminality began to decline as the government re-established its authority and criminal gangs were squeezed out (or sometimes hired) by legal security companies.

The challenge of dealing with these problems was complicated by widening divisions within the new ruling elite. At the end of 1992, faced with growing opposition to economic reforms, Yeltsin sacked Gaidar as Prime Minister and turned to an experienced politician from the Soviet *nomenklatura*, the former gas industry boss, Viktor Chernomyrdin. The Supreme Soviet accused Yeltsin of dictatorial behavior (Khasbulatov described him and his colleagues as a “collective Rasputin”) and tried to rescind his right to rule by decree. Yeltsin and his colleagues accused their opponents of blocking reforms that limited their own access to Soviet assets.

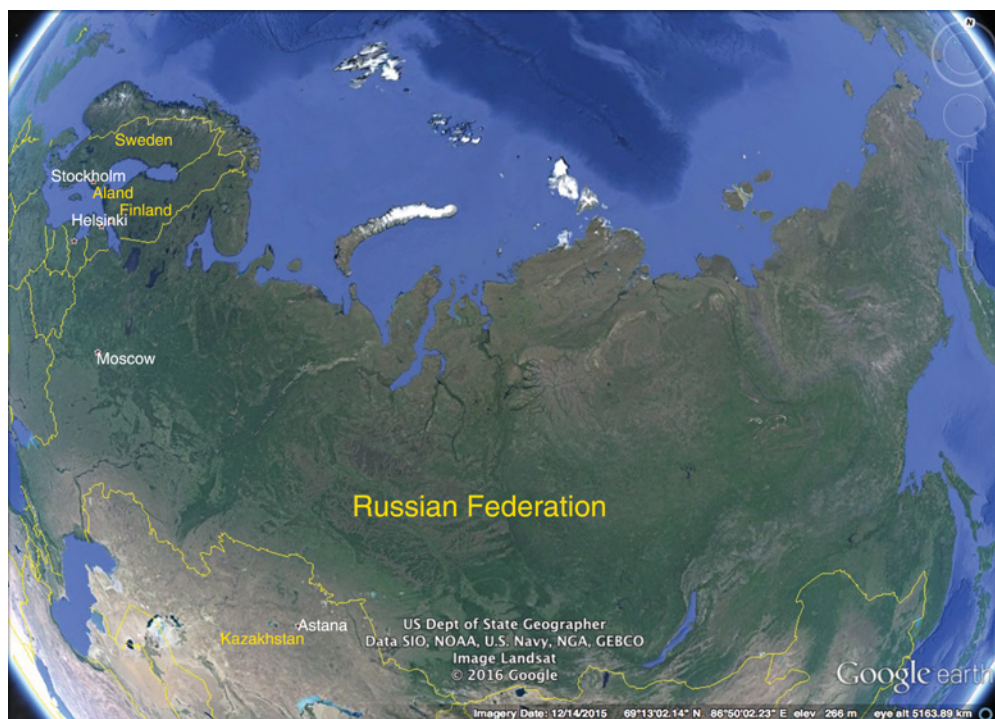
Russia’s Soviet-era constitution offered no clear way of resolving these tensions between the President and the Supreme Soviet, so the deadlock generated a constitutional crisis. In September 1993, Yeltsin dissolved the Supreme Soviet, in a move that was technically illegal. The Supreme Soviet ignored the order and announced that the President had been replaced by the Vice-President, Rutskoi. On October 3 and 4, supporters of the Supreme Soviet tried to take over the radio station at Ostankino to publicize their cause. Yeltsin brought in tanks to bombard the Supreme Soviet in the so-called “White House,” where, just two years earlier, he had defied the August putsch (Figure 18.10). The bombardment cost several hundred lives. It was particularly shocking because this was the first time military force had been used in an internal conflict since the Civil War.<sup>56</sup> Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were arrested. Western leaders were strikingly generous in their assessments of Yeltsin’s handling of the crisis, partly because Yeltsin’s opponents seemed even less democratically inclined than Yeltsin himself, while Yeltsin’s supporters at least seemed committed to market reform. Whoever won, it was becoming clear that a strong government would be needed to manage change. Both sides now understood this.



**Figure 18.10** Tanks firing on the “White House,” the home of the Russian Supreme Soviet, October 4, 1993. Courtesy of Peter Turnley. Reproduced with permission of Getty Images.

The conflicts of 1993 could have gone either way. A successful anti-Yeltsin coup might have brought Rutskoi to the presidency on an anti-reform platform, perhaps in alliance with the revived Communist Party. That outcome would surely have slowed the pace of reform even further. But even Yeltsin’s violent victory would concentrate more power in the hands of the President. However, Yeltsin’s success ensured that in Russia, at least, there would be no fundamental retreat from the economic reforms of 1992.

Yeltsin drafted a new constitution under which the President enjoyed increased powers, including the right to choose the Prime Minister. *Izvestiya* described the new form of government as a “Super-Presidential Republic.” Yeltsin conceded in an interview, “I don’t deny that the powers of the President in the draft constitution are considerable, but what do you expect in a country that is used to tsars and strong leaders?”<sup>57</sup> With some changes, the 1993 constitution remains in force today. It replaced the Russian Supreme Soviet with a two-house parliament. The lower house, the Duma, contained 450 members, half elected by a majority in individual constituencies, the other half distributed to parties on the basis of their overall proportion of votes. The upper house, the Council of the Federation, contained two members from each of the Federation’s 89 republics. Parallels with the 1906 Fundamental Laws were hard to miss, and some described Yeltsin as a “President-Tsar.”<sup>58</sup>



**Map 18.1** Google Earth map of the Russian Federation.

By 1994 many key features of the Russian Republic’s modern economic and political system were already in place. The price system was largely unregulated, and a significant proportion of productive assets was privately owned. The government was evolving as a parliamentary system with a strong President and limited or ambiguous division of powers. Most Russians understood that things could have been worse. After all, the Russian Federation did not fall apart, there was no civil war, and the economy did not collapse completely.

## 1995–2000: CONSOLIDATION AND STABILIZATION

But partial economic reform and a new constitution did not guarantee stability. In the mid-1990s, the Russian government faced three main dangers: (1) a war in Chechnya that threatened to break up the Russian Federation; (2) a resurgent Communist Party, and a new nationalist party under Vladimir Zhirinovskii, both of which threatened to roll back reform; and (3) a corrupt and stagnant economy.

The centrifugal forces of the reform era had loosened Moscow’s grip on the Russian Federation’s 89 provinces and autonomous regions. Indeed, before the final collapse of 1991, Yeltsin himself had invited non-Russians to “seize as much sovereignty as you can handle.”<sup>59</sup> Particularly in non-Russian regions, many local leaders took him at his word. In Kazan’, the capital of Tatarstan,

Mintimer Shaimiev, the First Secretary of the regional Communist Party, supported the August 1991 putsch, and ignored Yeltsin's economic reforms.<sup>60</sup> He ran Tatarstan through a network of relatives he had placed in key political or business positions, many of whom were elected to the regional parliament.

Fearing that the Federation itself might disintegrate, Yeltsin negotiated a "Federation Treaty" in 1992, which kept most regions, including Tatarstan, within the Federation. The methods he used to bring regional leaders into line illustrated the extent to which Yeltsin was already "managing" Russia's young democracy. A 1997 *Moscow Times* article reported that Kirsan Iliumzhinov, the millionaire businessman and leader of Kalmykia, was disciplined in 1993 by government threats to expose the corrupt methods he had used to build up his fortune. The threats persuaded Iliumzhinov to accept the authority of the federal government, adding, helpfully, that "everything good" comes from the "center."<sup>61</sup>

But these methods did not work in Chechnya. Here, Jokhar Dudaev, a former officer in the Soviet armed forces, who had been deported to Kazakhstan as a child along with most of the Chechen population, had been elected leader by a council of elders. In the Caucasus, the problems Tsarist governments had failed to solve in the nineteenth century remained unsolved at the end of the twentieth century. Dudaev rejected Yeltsin's Federation Treaty, and demanded real independence. In December 1994, over the opposition of the Russian Duma, Yeltsin sent in troops. The Russian army, demoralized and weakened by cuts in funding, performed badly. Casualties were high, and the invasion ended in a stalemate. In 1996, Yeltsin negotiated a humiliating withdrawal, leaving Chechnya's status, and that of the entire Federation, unclear until 1999, when the situation was clarified during a brutal second Chechen war launched in August 1999 and managed by Yeltsin's eventual successor, Vladimir Putin.

Equally dangerous for Yeltsin himself and for the entire process of reform was the rising power and influence of political parties that looked back fondly to the Soviet era. Most important were the revived Communist Party of the Russian Federation (or KPRF), under Gennadii Ziuganov, and Vladimir Zhirinovskii's "Liberal Democratic" party, which was neither liberal nor democratic, but essentially nationalistic in its ideology. In parliamentary elections held in December 1993 under the new Yeltsin constitution, Zhirinovskii was the main winner, followed by the Communist Party. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, Yeltsin's opponents secured well over 50 percent of the vote, and it began to seem that the communist leader, Gennadii Ziuganov, might win the 1996 presidential election, returning a partially capitalist Russia to communist rule.

By early 1996, Yeltsin's popularity had fallen to its lowest level. His public performances, sometimes fueled by alcohol, were bizarre and embarrassing, and his health seemed to be failing. However, Yeltsin decided once again to stand for election. He had the support of the West, which still saw him as the most democratic and market-oriented candidate for the presidency. He was supported by most of the administration, and by the wealthy emerging group of oligarchs, some of whom now controlled large sections of the media. He could also count on significant support from the army and the *siloviki*, or "power

ministers,” who had supported him in his conflicts with the Supreme Soviet. He remade himself, losing weight and temporarily giving up hard liquor. He forced enterprises to pay overdue wages, and, at the risk of a return to hyperinflation, raised salaries and pensions. Despite widespread nostalgia for the Soviet past, it turned out that much of the population did not relish the prospect of a return to communist rule. To the surprise of many, Yeltsin won the 1996 presidential election decisively. In the first round of the 1996 election, Yeltsin gained 35 percent of the vote and Ziuganov 32 percent; in the runoff election in July, Yeltsin gained 54 percent and Ziuganov 40 percent.

The victory required careful and expensive management of the electoral process, exploiting the many ambiguities of the new constitution. In 1996 as in 1906, the lack of a clear division of powers gave the executive a large gray area in which to maneuver before and during elections. The Kremlin influenced regional and national elections by offering or denying lucrative government contracts or export licenses to enterprises or entire regions, or by offering or denying valuable perks or apartments to parliamentary deputies and their families.<sup>62</sup> Particularly egregious was the way the government attracted funding and support from some of the new Russian oligarchs through the so-called “loans-for-shares” deal. Under this scheme, negotiated just before the elections, oligarchs offered loans to the government that were unlikely to be paid back, and received as collateral shares in major public enterprises.<sup>63</sup> In practice, the scheme amounted to a new round of privatization of government assets at fire-sale prices to a small, supportive group of oligarchs. Vladimir Potanin, who proposed the “loans-for-shares” deal, did extraordinarily well out of it. In 1995, his company, Uneximbank, made a loan of \$130 million to the government in return for the right to manage a large number of shares in a government oil business, Sidanco. When Yeltsin was re-elected, Potanin became first deputy Prime Minister, and while he was in office his company bought more Sidanco shares.<sup>64</sup> Mikhail Khodarkovskii, founder of the Menatep bank, gained control of the Yukos oil company in return for a loan of over \$300 million. Roman Abramovich and Boris Berezovskii gained control of Sibneft in return for loans of \$100 million.<sup>65</sup> Despite such corruption, the loans-for-shares scheme did increase levels of privatization, and that may explain why Anatolii Chubais reluctantly supported it.

In partnership with friendly oligarchs, the government began to tame the media, which had been remarkably free of government interference in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The government found it could manage media bosses most easily by tweaking the laws on media ownership and controlling the issuing of media licenses. In the 1996 election, Yeltsin’s close relations with media moguls ensured favorable press and media coverage. All parties used “black PR” (*Cherny Piar*), which involved publishing sometimes completely fictitious journalistic articles designed to blacken the reputation of rivals. The cables of broadcasting stations supporting rival candidates were sometimes cut; violent demonstrations were organized in the name of opponents; and all sides made use of “doubles,” people who registered as candidates under names confusingly similar to those of other candidates, to siphon votes from other parties. For example, candidates registered under the strange name of “KPRF” to draw



off votes from the Communist Party, the KPRF. Entire parties were created with the same goal, such as the “Conservative Party of the Russian Federation,” or the “Constitutional Party of the Russian Federation,” both with the initials KPRF. Finally, in a society with a weak judiciary, it was not hard to cow the courts. As one judicial worker explained, “Sure we have independent courts, but people who work there receive their housing, if not their salary, from the authorities. Which kind of housing, when, and where depends on these officials.”<sup>66</sup>

Gaidar saw Yeltsin’s victory, against the odds, as a critical turning point in post-Soviet history, arguing that if the Communist Party could not win a presidential election despite the huge problems facing the government, it had probably lost its last chance of a return to power.<sup>67</sup>

Yeltsin’s election briefly stabilized the political situation. In 1997 the Russian ruble stabilized, the Russian stock market began to take off, and, for the first time since 1991, production began to rise again. But Yeltsin was not well, and important decisions began to be made by a group of relations and cronies known as the “family.” It included Yeltsin’s daughter, Tanya, the oligarch Boris Berezovskii, and Alexander Korzhakov, who was the head of Yeltsin’s security detail and his regular tennis partner. Tax revenues remained low, as most businesses evaded taxes; continued subsidies made it impossible to balance the budget; and soon the government had to borrow from home and abroad. It had started issuing treasury bills (GKO) in 1992; by May 1998 these were worth \$70 billion, or 17 percent of the GDP.

A new economic crisis arrived in mid-1998. Falling oil prices and the Asian financial crisis hit Russia hard in 1997, but the crash finally came in 1998, after oil prices fell to a low of \$10 a barrel, almost one eighth of the price in the early 1980s. On August 17, 1998, the Russian government stopped paying interest on its domestic and foreign debts, devalued the ruble by 30 percent, and froze bank accounts.<sup>68</sup> The stock market crashed, millions lost their savings for the second time in a decade, inflation soared, and production began to fall again. The 1998 crisis brought the Russian state close to bankruptcy and forced it to abandon most remaining subsidies, in practice imposing a new round of price liberalization. Because Russian markets were so important to other CIS countries, the crisis affected all the PSIERs. Foreign credit dried up and governments could no longer afford the huge subsidies they were still paying to keep enterprises afloat and prices low.<sup>69</sup>

The 1998 crisis proved an important turning point in the history of Russia and the entire region. In all the CIS countries, it encouraged fiscal discipline even during the boom years that followed. It was an important lesson to governments still learning to wean themselves off traditional “soft budget constraints” in order to stay afloat in a capitalist world economy. Since 1998, most CIS countries have avoided serious budget deficits and contained inflation.<sup>70</sup> Regional governments and enterprises, too, had to learn to live without, or with greatly reduced, government subsidies. Many former managers, forced to compete on real markets, found this so difficult that they sold their enterprises to a new class of entrepreneurs that expected to compete and to innovate. The other striking change was a return to economic growth in most of the

PSIERS. Devaluations, followed by rising oil prices, explain why growth began to rise at last in many of these economies, particularly the oil exporters, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

But the benefits of the 1998 crisis would become apparent only over time. By the late 1990s, governmental instability in Russia, and the embarrassment of being ruled by an unpredictable and sometimes drunken President, economic decline, corruption, and criminality had created huge levels of disillusionment with the twin projects of democratization and market reform. This disillusionment, coupled with a decline in corruption and a rise in production and oil revenues, help explain the relief with which many Russians greeted the emergence of a new, younger President after the election of a former KGB agent, Vladimir Putin, in 2000.

## *STABILITY AND A RETURN TO CENTRALIST TRADITIONS*

If the Yeltsin era saw a collapse of governmental authority amidst rapid and chaotic economic reforms, followed by a slow rebuilding of the center, the Putin era would be characterized by a return to strong and relatively centralized government, and rapid economic growth, particularly before the 2008 financial crisis. This is when Russians, above all those in the larger cities, finally entered the world of consumer capitalism. By 2008, every second family owned a computer, there were 1.4 cell phones for every person, between 1990 and 2008, the number completing tertiary education tripled, and the number of Russians traveling abroad increased from 8 million in 1993 to 22 million in 2009.<sup>71</sup>

Putin himself began his career in the KGB and spent five years as an agent in East Germany. In the early 1990s, he was a close assistant to the St. Petersburg boss Anatolii Sobchak. He was brought to Moscow in 1996 due to his growing reputation as a fixer. In July 1998, Yeltsin appointed him head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor to the KGB. A year later, in August 1999, Yeltsin appointed Putin Prime Minister.

Putin's networks and sympathies lay with the *siloviki* (from *silovye struktury*, or "power structures"), those working in the "power ministries," the police, the army, heavy industry, and the defense establishment. Like most of the *siloviki*, he believed that the state should play a leading role in managing the economy, and even in managing society.<sup>72</sup> On the day of his nomination as Prime Minister, he commented in an interview that "The main problem we have is the absence of political stability,"<sup>73</sup> a comment that, in retrospect, looks like a personal political manifesto. In August, he launched a new war to resolve the situation in Chechnya, and soon gained a reputation as a strong and decisive leader. For many, this was a welcome contrast to Yeltsin's rule. In December, Yeltsin resigned as President and appointed Putin acting President. In May 2000, Putin was elected President in his own right.

Under Putin's rule, stabilization and the recreation of a strong center or *vertikal'* would become major policy goals, and officials with *silovik* backgrounds

would play an increasingly important role. Within a few years Putin had brought both the regions and the new class of oligarchs to heel, and strengthened the power and prestige of the central government. After the *smuta* or “Time of Troubles” of the 1990s, the return to some form of “normality” had great appeal to the population at large. Combined with Putin’s relative youth and vigor it would ensure a long period of popularity for the new President. Many of his ideas were described in a document called “Russia at the turn of the millennium,” released on December 29, 1999 on the government’s internet site.<sup>74</sup> Putin argued, first, that there could be no going back. Despite the achievements of the Soviet era, the communist experiment was “a blind alley, far from the mainstream of civilization,” and it had failed to “make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people.” Second, he argued for a return to stability and normality: the Russian people “cannot endure another new radical upheaval.” Both principles suggested that Putin had no intention of undoing the fundamental changes of recent years.

Nevertheless, much of Putin’s 1999 manifesto harked back to older Russian traditions of mobilization and rule. It was vital, he argued, to respect Russia’s own traditions. Russia had to find “its own path of renewal ... Our future depends on combining the universal principles of the market economy and democracy with Russian realities.” The manifesto talked of the importance of patriotism, of Russia as a great power, and of the state as a peculiarly important institution in Russia. Russia, he insisted, should not try to become a pale imitation of the USA or Britain. On the contrary,

Our state and its institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly to be discarded. Quite the contrary, they see it as the source and guarantee of order and the initiator and the main driving force of change. ... The key to Russia’s recovery and growth today lies in the state-political sphere. Russia needs strong state power and must have it.

Putin expected the state to continue playing a significant economic role as “an efficient co-ordinator of the country’s economic and social forces.” Finally, in one more nod to Russian cultural traditions, he insisted on the importance of “social solidarity,” arguing that in Russia, “A striving for collective forms of social activity has always predominated over individualism.”

Putin was aware of the importance of efficient markets and innovative industries in a capitalist world, and in his early years in office he supported tighter budgetary policies and significant economic reform, and worked towards closer collaboration with the West. Within a few years, though, economic reform stalled under Putin, too, particularly after what he saw as western meddling in Ukraine during the 2004 “Orange Revolution.” The Russian government became increasingly anti-western and, as in the 1970s, it began to rely to a dangerous extent on its resource wealth. The severe financial crisis of 2008 hit Russia harder than most of the PSIERs, and highlighted Russia’s vulnerability to fluctuations in international resource prices. In 2010, oil and gas made up about two thirds of Russian export revenues, and accounted for almost half of

the government's revenues.<sup>75</sup> In 2009, Putin's (temporary) successor as President, Dmitrii Medvedev, wrote:

I can say openly, I am unhappy with the structure of our economy ... What we really have not done to the necessary degree – we have not carried out diversification of the structure of our economy ... we entered the crisis with the previous raw materials structure. And as soon as prices on oil and gas declined, of course we started facing problems.<sup>76</sup>

One of the most important questions facing Russia's government today is whether political and economic reforms have gone far enough to maintain Russia's competitiveness in a global capitalist world, and to ensure political and economic stability over the next few decades.<sup>77</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Putin, *First Person*, 186.
- 2 Collins, *Clan Politics*, 3, summarizing the arguments of Carothers, "The End of the Transitions Paradigm."
- 3 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, Ch. 5, is on strategies for transition; 86–87 describe the key recommendations of the Washington consensus.
- 4 Mawdsley and White, *Soviet Elite*, 292–293.
- 5 Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, 504.
- 6 Hahn, *Russia's Revolution from Above*, xii, cited from Sakwa, *Putin*, 39.
- 7 Mawdsley and White, *Soviet Elite*, 293.
- 8 Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 46–48.
- 9 Abashin, "Nation-Construction," 151.
- 10 Yurii Badzo, cited in Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 175.
- 11 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 507.
- 12 Mawdsley and White, *Soviet Elite*, 288.
- 13 Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works*, 22; she defines informal practices as "regular sets of players' strategies that infringe on, manipulate, or exploit formal rules and that make use of informal norms and personal obligations for pursuing goals outside the personal domain."
- 14 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 85.
- 15 Wilson, *Belarus*, 170.
- 16 From Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 246.
- 17 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 192.
- 18 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 68.
- 19 Gaddy and Ickes, "Russia's Dependence on Resources," 315.
- 20 Gaddy and Ickes, "The Russian Economy through 2020."
- 21 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 60.
- 22 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 186–189, 349.
- 23 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 58.
- 24 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 96, citing Colton, *Yeltsin*, 220.
- 25 *The Economist*, obituary of Egor Gaidar, December 17, 2009, accessed December 3, 2012 from <http://www.economist.com/node/15125467>
- 26 Cited from Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 90.
- 27 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 519.

- 28 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 96.
- 29 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 97–98.
- 30 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 122.
- 31 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 107–108.
- 32 Aslund, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, 110–111.
- 33 Humphrey, *Unmaking of Soviet Life*, 164.
- 34 Cited from Humphrey, *Unmaking of Soviet Life*, xxi–xxii.
- 35 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 164.
- 36 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 54, while Anders Aslund argues that inflated Soviet-era production figures mean that the real fall in production was significantly less; Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 7–8.
- 37 Entov and Lugovoy, “Growth Trends.”
- 38 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, xvi–xvii, figures based on EBRD, graph 4.1, “Gross domestic produce as a percentage of the 1989 level,” 50, 54.
- 39 Yemtsov and Lokshin, “Poverty and Inequality in Russia,” 780–782.
- 40 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 189, 205, 211.
- 41 Yemtsov and Lokshin, “Poverty and Inequality in Russia,” 785–786.
- 42 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 204.
- 43 Denisova and Shapiro, “Recent Demographic Developments,” 801.
- 44 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 670.
- 45 Figures on poverty and inequality levels from Yemtsov and Lokshin, “Poverty and Inequality in Russia,” 778.
- 46 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 665–666.
- 47 Thornton, “Regional Challenges,” 666–667, 671, 669, 674.
- 48 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 520.
- 49 See the discussion of Russian oligarchs in Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 145–147.
- 50 Mawdsley and White, *Soviet Elite*, 296.
- 51 Mawdsley and White, *Soviet Elite*, 298.
- 52 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 146.
- 53 Yergin, *The Prize*, 27.
- 54 Yergin, *The Prize*, 28.
- 55 Humphrey, *Unmaking of Soviet Life*, Ch. 5, “Russian Protection Rackets and the Appropriation of Law and Order,” 112.
- 56 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 523.
- 57 White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 72.
- 58 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 97; and White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, 76.
- 59 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 530.
- 60 The following is based on Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia*, 230–231.
- 61 Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works*, 85.
- 62 Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia*, 227–228; from accounts by Georgy Satarov, who managed Yeltsin's relations with the Duma in the mid-1990s.
- 63 Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia*, 181ff., is good on the loans-for-shares process and Potanin.
- 64 Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia*, 181.
- 65 Yergin, *The Prize*, 30, 32.
- 66 Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works*, 35–37, 50.
- 67 Gerasimov, *Istoriia Rossii*, 153.
- 68 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 149.
- 69 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 69.

- 70 Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 85.
- 71 Figures from Treisman, “Russia’s Political Economy,” 152–153.
- 72 Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 101.
- 73 Cited in Jack, *Inside Putin’s Russia*, 44.
- 74 Available as an appendix to Sakwa, *Putin*, 251–262.
- 75 Gaddy and Ickes, “The Russian Economy through 2020,” 169.
- 76 Travin, “Oil, Gas, Russia, and the 2008–2009 Economic Crisis,” 193–194.
- 77 See Lipman and Petrov, *Russia in 2020*, and Lipman and Petrov, *Russia in 2025*.

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## [19] 1991–2000: BUILDING NEW STATES: BEYOND THE HEARTLANDS

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In much of eastern Europe, the task of building a new state with a market economy and a democratic political system was launched with purpose and enthusiasm. Independence came as an exciting, if daunting challenge. In the Russian Federation, too, leaders tackled the task of state building with a clear sense of purpose and direction. But in the other PSIERs, independence arrived unexpectedly and without invitation. New states were cobbled together, and reforms were introduced on the run or resisted. Though some populations, particularly in Ukraine, welcomed independence, the leaders of most of the PSIERs had little enthusiasm for reform, and struggled to find their balance in unfamiliar and rapidly changing surroundings. Sally Cummings writes of Kazakhstan,

Kazakhstan was born by default. The republic's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 was neither the result of secessionist demands by its leadership, nor a national liberation movement; it resulted from the decision by Moscow to withdraw its maintenance of the Soviet edifice.<sup>1</sup>

The strategies and decisions taken by the new leaders were shaped, as in Russia, by Soviet traditions of governance, because most of the new leaders had learned their trade within the Soviet *nomenklatura*. This explains many similarities in the histories of the new states, in particular their almost universal drift back towards centralist styles of government and economic management. But their histories were also driven by ancient geographical, historical, and cultural differences; by the geopolitics of a capitalist world that was larger, more complex, and more dynamic than the Soviet Union; and by the sometimes off-the-cuff decisions of individual leaders and the unexpected contingencies of a fast-moving environment. Despite some common features, the histories of the PSIERs also diverged in many important respects.

This chapter will survey the histories of the non-Russian PSIERs, before 2000, with the occasional glance beyond that date. It will begin with the Slavic

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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republics, Belarus and Ukraine, then move on to the Central Asian republics. It will end by discussing Xinjiang and Mongolia, two regions that had not formally been part of the Soviet Union but *were* part of Inner Eurasia.

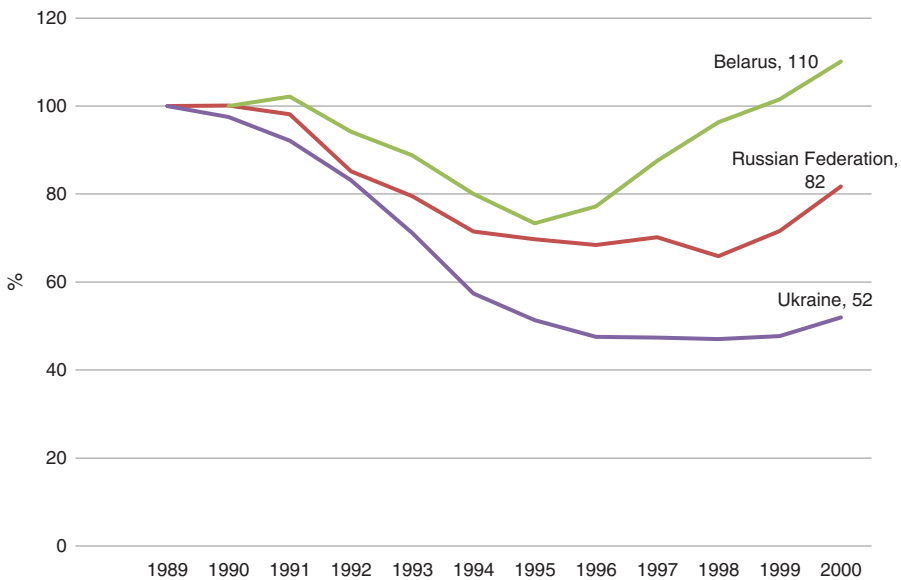
### *THE SLAVIC REPUBLICS: UKRAINE AND BELARUS*

Despite cultural similarities, and shared historical traditions, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine would take very different paths in the post-Soviet world.

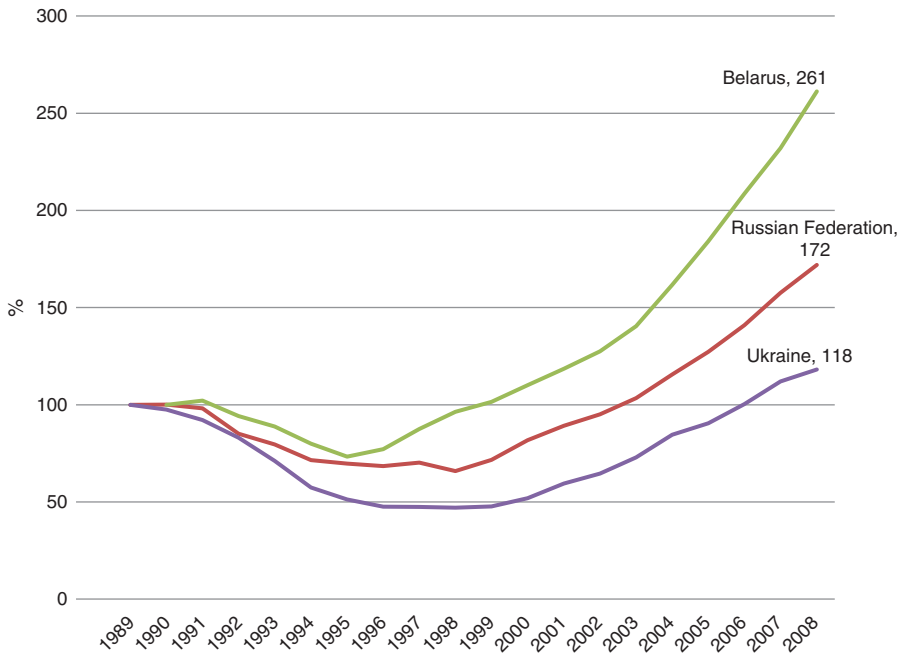
Even their patterns of decline and recovery were different. Of the three Slavic republics, Belarus took the fewest steps towards political or economic reform, and retained strong, centralized state structures, but suffered the smallest economic decline and enjoyed the fastest recovery. Russia undertook significant economic and political reforms, and retained relatively strong state structures, but its economic decline was greater, and its recovery later than in Belarus. Finally, Ukraine introduced significant political and economic reforms, but they were managed by a weaker, more divided, and less stable state, and this may help explain why Ukraine’s economic decline went further, and its recovery came later than in Belarus or Russia. (Figures 19.1 and 19.2.)

#### UKRAINE

Modern Ukraine has a population of almost 50 million, and an area larger than any western European state (Map 19.1). Russian historians have generally



**Figure 19.1** Changing GNI of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

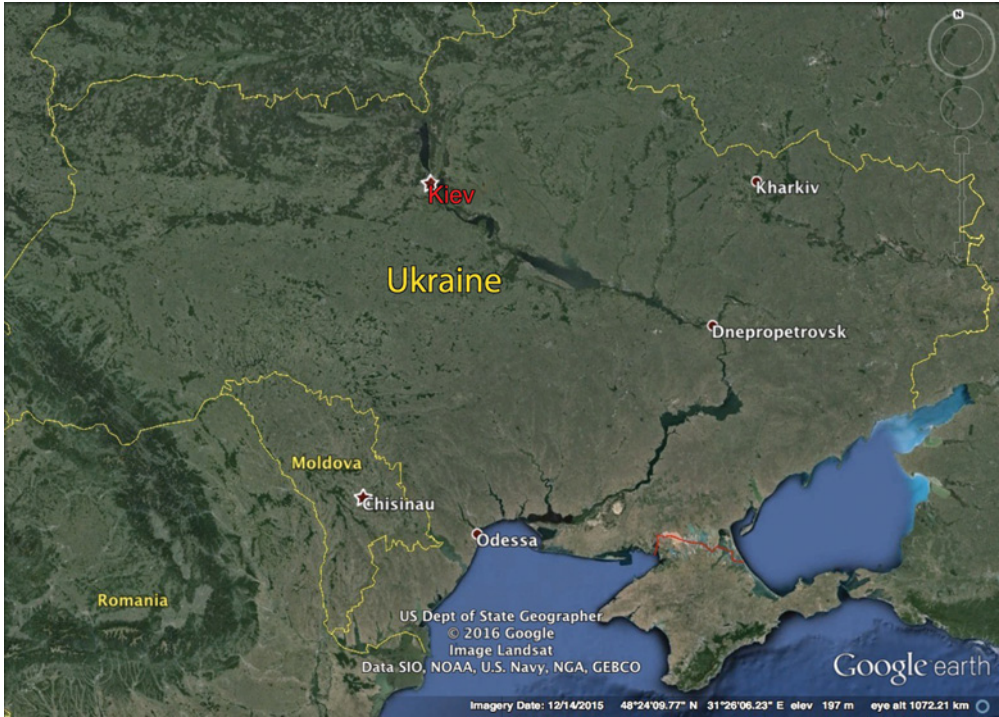


**Figure 19.2** Changing GNI of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

treated Ukraine as the homeland of Rus', and an integral part of Russia and Russian history, while Russian linguists have generally regarded Ukrainian as a dialect of Russian. But Ukrainian scholars, such as the great nineteenth-century historian Mykhailo Hruhshevsky, saw Ukraine as a distinct nation, with an independent national history and a language of its own.

Ukraine's various regions were incorporated piecemeal into the Russian Empire from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries up to the Stalin era. East of the Dnieper river, Ukraine included much of the Pontic steppes, regions that had once been controlled by the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean khanate, but had then been settled by Cossacks and Ukrainian and Russian soldiers and farmers, before becoming a major industrialized region in the late nineteenth century. West of the Dnieper, Ukraine reaches into Podolia and Volhynia, which had been parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, into Galicia in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, and even into regions on the shores of the Black Sea that had been part of the Ottoman Empire. Today, most Ukrainians who identify as Russian live east of the Dnieper (the most Russian-dominated region is the Crimea), and most who identify strongly as Ukrainian live in western Ukraine. There are also significant Polish and Jewish minorities and other, smaller ethnic groups.

Geographically, historically, and culturally, Ukraine ("Borderland") straddles the borders between Inner and Outer Eurasia, and that simple



**Map 19.1** Google Earth map of Ukraine.

geographical fact would dominate Ukraine’s post-Soviet history. Generally speaking, its western regions looked towards Europe, while its eastern regions looked towards Russia and Inner Eurasia.

Modern forms of Ukrainian nationalism arose in Kiev and in Ukraine’s western regions, amongst a Ukrainian intelligentsia that emerged in the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, Ukrainian nationalism was influential enough to provoke Tsarist repression. An independent Ukrainian state existed briefly during the years of revolution and civil war, and, though Ukraine did not survive as an independent state, it did survive as a distinct Soviet republic during the Soviet era, so some of the structures and forms of statehood survived. Ukrainian nationalism was suppressed for most of the Soviet era, but revived, like many other regional nationalisms, in the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

Like many colonial borders, those of Ukraine, as drawn up in the early 1920s, complicated the task of nation building, because those who identified as Russian were almost as numerous as those who identified as Ukrainian. This ensured that tensions between competing ideas of Ukrainian statehood would muddy attempts at state building and reform. At the time of writing (2017), these divisions, which once seemed manageable, have ignited a slow-burning civil war in the Russian-dominated eastern regions.

In the late 1980s, even many who did not identify primarily as Ukrainians supported the idea of Ukrainian independence. The nuclear accident at

Chernobyl in April 1986 highlighted Kiev's dependence on decisions taken in Moscow. In February 1989, the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society emerged as one of the first large organizations not under the direct control of the Communist Party. Revelations were published about the fate of Ukrainian nationalists during the purges, and the collectivization famines known in Ukraine as the "Holodomor," or "Death by Hunger." There was growing interest in the independent Ukraine of the Civil War years, and in Cossack history, which became a potent symbol of Ukrainianness. The Ukrainian flag appeared at demonstrations in 1989, first in western Ukraine, then in Kiev. In March 1989, there were elections to a Ukrainian Congress of People's Deputies, the *Verkhovna Rada*. Informal organizations appeared, such as the Ukrainian nationalist organization Rukh. In October 1990, there were pro-independence protests by students on Kiev's central square, the Maidan. In August 1991, just after the failed Moscow coup, the Rada voted almost unanimously for independence, in a declaration that referred to the "thousand-year tradition of state building in Ukraine."

In December 1991, as the Soviet Union disintegrated, Leonid Kravchuk was elected Ukraine's first President. Though a member of the Communist Party since the 1950s, his own biography reflected Ukraine's checkered past. He was born in Volhynia, on lands that were part of Poland before the Soviet invasion in 1939. He was a long-time member of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, and the background he shared with other post-Soviet leaders surely eased the task of partitioning the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. Like many regional leaders, Kravchuk did not actively oppose the August 1991 coup in Moscow, but did not support it openly enough to prevent his election as President three months later.

Ukraine's borderland status was reflected in its first steps in foreign policy. It looked both to the east and the west. In 1992, Kravchuk agreed to lease the Sevastopol naval base to Russia for five years, and Russia agreed to maintain flows of cheap oil and gas to Ukraine. But Ukraine also accepted a deal brokered by the USA, to hand over Ukraine's nuclear weapons to Russia, and soon, it was receiving US aid. In 1994, Ukraine became the first post-Soviet state to sign an agreement of cooperation with the European Union (EU).<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after independence, even many Russian-speaking Ukrainians identified as Ukrainian. On December 1, 1991, more than 90 percent of the population voted for independence. The Ukrainian nationalist organization Rukh even tried, though without much success, to attract Russian members. The issue of Ukrainian identity was in any case subtle and confusing. According to the 1989 census, 73 percent of Ukraine's population identified themselves as ethnically Ukrainian, and 22 percent as Russian, in a total population of 51.4 million. But many who identified as Ukrainian did not nominate Ukrainian as their main language, and less than 50 percent used Ukrainian most of the time. Even in 2001, it appeared that 80 percent of the population used Russian as their "primary language of communication," while most publications and television programs were still in Russian.<sup>3</sup> Widespread use of Russian reflected the dominant role of Russian in the Soviet era, particularly in the towns and the eastern regions. It had been the language of

government, of management, of many educational institutions, and most of the media.

Not surprisingly, differences over the nature of a Ukrainian nation emerged early. A 1989 poll of Rukh members showed that 73 percent gave nation building as their first priority while in Ukraine as a whole, only 12 percent put this goal first. In 1990, a symbolic “linking of hands,” joined by 1 million Ukrainians, reached from Lviv in the west to the largely Russian-speaking city of Kiev, but did not extend into eastern Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> The size, importance, and geographical concentration of the Russian minority raised many practical problems for the new nation. For example, the Ukrainian army was formed from units of the Soviet army stationed on Ukrainian soil at the end of 1991. About 70 percent of its officers identified as Russian. Where would their loyalties lie in the event of a conflict with Russia, perhaps over the future of Crimea, a Russian-dominated region that had been incorporated within Ukraine only in 1954, under Khrushchev? In 1992, when soldiers and officers of the new Ukrainian army began taking oaths of allegiance to the new state, some 10,000 officers refused the oath, and were allowed to retire or leave for Russia.<sup>5</sup>

These differences made it risky to insist too strongly, as many Ukrainian nationalists wished, on the new state’s “Ukrainianness.” Russian speakers in particular argued for a federal state, with at least two national languages. Yet on the crucial constitutional issue, the nationalists got their way. Chapter 1, article 2 of Ukraine’s 1996 constitution declared that, “Ukraine is a unitary state. The territory of Ukraine within its present border is indivisible and inviolable.” Chapter 1, article 10 dealt somewhat ambiguously with the issue of language, giving Russian a secondary status below Ukrainian.

The state language of Ukraine is the Ukrainian language. The State ensures the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine. In Ukraine, the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine, is guaranteed.

As a result of this article, all official documents, including election documents, had to be published in Ukrainian, a language unfamiliar to many Ukrainians.

Differences over national identity created divisions on many important issues. While Ukrainian nationalists sought a unitary state with strong ties to Europe, many in the Russian-dominated eastern regions sought a federal state with at least two national languages, and continuing ties to Russia. These fundamental divisions created space for genuinely democratic debates, and by the mid-1990s, Ukraine was widely reckoned to be one of the most democratic of the PSIERs. But divisions also weakened the young state and limited its power to develop coherent policies both at home and abroad. The demographic and political balance between the Russian-dominated east and the Ukrainian west yielded governments formed after complex and often difficult negotiations, which involved awkward tradeoffs on policy and personnel, and prevented the development of coherent long-term programs of reform.

These divisions were compounded by the complex challenge of building a post-Soviet economy. Political drift guaranteed drift on economic policy, too. Before 1993, the National Bank of Ukraine issued ruble credits with little restraint, and by 1992, inflation had reached 2,500 percent. Ukraine's GDP fell further than in any of the former Soviet republics except those such as Tajikistan and Moldova that disintegrated in civil war. Yet political divisions made it difficult to formulate coherent strategies for recovery or reform. Apart from Tajikistan, Ukraine would be the last of the PSIERs to return to 1989 levels of production, well after 2000.

The depth and persistence of Ukraine's economic decline had many causes. They included the loss of Soviet orders for Ukraine's huge coal, metallurgical, and weapons industries, most of them in the east. These regions had supplied most of the Soviet defense sector before 1991. Ukraine lost Soviet subsidies, and, with little gas or oil of its own, it had to depend on Russia for most of its energy. The slow recovery also reflected the weakness of a divided state, and its limited control over economic change. Even more than in Russia, half-hearted and contested programs of economic reform created a vast arena for rent-taking and corruption, while a weak state was all too easily co-opted by an increasingly wealthy and powerful class of oligarchs. The central government surrendered much of its economic control to regional councils, factory directors, and farm managers, the very class that had consolidated so much power in the later years of the Soviet era. The power of the regions helps explain the success of Ukraine's oligarchs, many of whom came from regional industrial fiefdoms such as the industrial center of Dnepropetrovsk. This was the home territory of Ukraine's second President, Leonid Kuchma, a former director of a Soviet-era missile factory.

Kuchma, who had been Prime Minister under Kravchuk, replaced his former boss as President in 1994. He launched a significant, and reasonably successful, program of privatization which, like the Russian program, used vouchers issued to citizens, which were rapidly bought up by entrepreneurs. A second round of privatization sold off major assets, often at very low prices, and mainly to Ukraine's emerging business class. Since 1996, most of Ukraine's GDP has come from the private sector, though many of the largest industries remain in state hands. Limits on price liberalization allowed rent-taking, particularly in transactions involving goods such as gas and oil that were subsidized by both the Russian and Ukrainian governments. Continued subsidies allowed huge arbitrage profits, while privatization let entrepreneurs acquire state resources and enterprises at knock-down prices.

Corruption reached from regional oligarchs to the top of the political system. Towards the end of his final term in office, President Kuchma was widely suspected of having arranged the assassination of a journalist investigating high-level corruption. By the mid-1990s, Ukraine's distinct combination of weak central government and powerful regional oligarchs was beginning to create a new ruling elite, dominated by oligarchs with regional bases, and their allies in government. Similar alliances had emerged also in Yeltsin's Russia, but there, under Yeltsin's successor, Putin, a stronger state would eventually bring regional officials and oligarchs into line. In Ukraine, as in Russia, inequality

increased. In the late 1990s average levels of inequality in Ukraine were lower than in Russia (Ukraine's Gini coefficient was 29, compared to Russia's 44), but recent estimates suggest that by 2014, 80–85 percent of the nation's wealth was controlled by just 100 people.<sup>6</sup> (See Figure 18.9.)

The 1998 economic crisis brought the government close to default, and by 1999, total production had fallen by more than 50 percent since independence. Economic decline took such a severe toll on living standards that Ukraine's population fell from 51.4 million in 1989 to 48.4 million in 2001, as Ukrainians emigrated and mortality rates rose.<sup>7</sup> But the economy did not collapse entirely, partly because of subsidized Russian sales of gas and oil: 90 percent of Ukrainian oil and 77 percent of its gas came from Russia, and Ukraine accumulated huge debts. In 2000, Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, a former chairman of the National Bank, launched a new round of price liberalization and fiscal tightening. At last the economy began to grow once more, but not until 2008 would Ukraine's GDP surpass the level of 1990. (See Figure 19.2.)

By 2000, Ukraine had a vibrant, if corrupt and lopsided market economy.<sup>8</sup> Its relatively weak state and the complex ethnic balance between regions allowed for genuine parliamentary debate and, eventually, for mass protest movements. While politicians tried as hard as their colleagues in the Russian Federation to manage elections and the media, they were generally less successful. In 2004, President Kuchma's hand-picked successor, Viktor Yanukovich, from eastern Ukraine, was elected as President in an election marred by massive corruption. The election provoked enormous protests in Maidan square in Kiev. Protesters denounced vote-rigging and corruption during the election. There was even an attempt to poison Yanukovich's presidential rival, the former Prime Minister, Viktor Yushchenko. Protesters also opposed Yanukovich's pro-Russian orientation, as most of those gathered on Maidan square supported a turn towards Europe and the EU. These protests came to be known as the "Orange Revolution," after Viktor Yushchenko's campaign colors. In December 2004, Yanukovich's election was annulled, and in January 2005, Yushchenko was elected as President.

In practice, little was achieved during Yushchenko's presidency, as the stand-off persisted between different camps within the emerging ruling elite. A constitutional amendment depriving the President of the right to appoint the Prime Minister ensured endless, debilitating conflicts between the country's two leading politicians, Yushchenko and his former ally, another former oligarch from eastern Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko.

Despite significant steps towards both democracy and market reform, Ukraine in the early twenty-first century appeared deadlocked, with a weak and divided state unable to take clear long-term decisions about the future. Should it support further market reforms, and ally more closely with (and perhaps eventually join) the EU, at the risk of alienating Russia and losing cheap Russian supplies of oil and gas? Or should it try, like Russia, to build a stronger state structure with greater control over the regions that could manage the economy, perhaps in close partnership with Russia and other former members of the Soviet Union? As it was, political weakness left the management of the economy largely to the whims of a new oligarchy, while



**Map 19.2** Google Earth map of Belarus.

uncertainty about Ukraine’s international orientation created tension with Russia, the main supplier of Ukrainian energy, without bringing Ukraine any closer to membership of the EU. In 2014, conflicts with Russia would turn into a slow-burning civil war after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 encouraged pro-Russian nationalists in eastern Ukraine to demand independence for “Novorossiya,” or incorporation with the Russian Federation. The Russian government, keen to appease its own nationalists, has supported them covertly, but to date (2017) both sides have avoided open war.

## BELARUS

Belarus (Map 19.2), like Ukraine, had strong historical links to eastern Europe, because it had long been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Belarus also had a brief tradition of independent statehood, as an independent Belarusian People’s Republic had emerged after the 1917 Revolution. In 1922, the Socialist Republic of Belarus became a founding member of the Soviet Union. But in Belarus there did not emerge a strong nationalist tradition. Though Belarusian was the republic’s official language, Russian was made a second state language in 1995, and it was, in practice, the republic’s dominant language, particularly in the cities.<sup>9</sup> Most of the Jewish population of



Belarus was deported and murdered during the Holocaust, and large numbers of Poles left during the war.

Though almost 80 percent of the population was described as Belarusian in a 1989 census, and Russians accounted for just 10 percent, there was little support for Belarusian nationalism.<sup>10</sup> A Belarusian National Front (BNF) was established in 1989, but it never became a dominant force in Belarusian politics and had little support within the Soviet-era *nomenklatura*. With large numbers of churchgoers, particularly in the formerly Polish parts in the west, religion also began to play a role in legitimizing the state, as in Russia. A 2002 law described Orthodoxy as playing a “defining role in the state traditions of the Belarusian people.” In practice, nostalgia for the Soviet era also played a legitimizing role, and periodically encouraged proposals for a closer union with Russia. In a 1991 poll, more citizens of Belarus (69 percent) identified themselves as “citizens of the USSR” than in any other part of the USSR. This complex mixture of legitimizing forces helps explain why Aliaksandr Lukashenka, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, once described himself as an “Orthodox atheist.”<sup>11</sup>

The absence of serious ethnic divisions helps explain the evolution of a strong, conservative, and relatively unified state structure, despite significant political divisions just after independence. Like most of the Central Asian PSIERs, the government of Belarus would limit both market and democratic reforms. Former Soviet institutions such as the KGB survived the transition well, as did most of the former elite, many of whom belonged to a retitled “Communist Party of Belarus” until 1994. In its resistance to reform after an initial period of experimentation, Belarus suggests what might have happened in the Russian Republic had the Communist Party won elections in the mid-1990s.

During the era of *perestroika*, there was little serious discussion of reform in Belarus, little political dissidence, and no serious preparation for independence. In the 1990 elections to the new Belarusian Supreme Soviet, communists won most of the 315 contested seats, and the Belarusian National Front or its allies won fewer than 40.<sup>12</sup> In April 1991, there were large-scale strikes caused by Moscow’s decision to raise prices for basic consumer goods. Though Belarus experienced all the uncertainties of *perestroika*’s final years, there did not emerge a coherent opposition movement. In the March 1991 referendum on the Soviet Union, 83 percent of Belarusian voters supported continuation of the Soviet Union. The Belarusian Communist Party leader Anatol Malafeev gave his full support to the August 1991 attempted coup in Moscow.

Despite these unpromising signs, in 1991 there were many reasons for thinking that Belarus could have made a relatively easy transition to democracy and a market economy. It was urbanized and had industrialized rapidly after the war; it had small reserves of oil, oil refineries, and metallurgical and fertilizer plants. Its population was well educated, enjoyed some of the highest living standards in the USSR, had few ethnic or religious divisions, and did not suffer extreme income inequalities.<sup>13</sup> Yet the republic’s rapid development in the later Soviet era may also help explain why nostalgia for the Soviet era would prove a potent force in Belarus.

Real independence came to a reluctant Belarus leadership as a result of the December 1991 meeting at Belovezhkaia in western Belarus between Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and the new Belarus communist leader Stanislaw Shushkevich. In the two years after independence, conflict between Shushkevich and his more conservative Prime Minister, Viacheslaw Kebich, stymied the development of a coherent reform plan. Shushkevich, a scientist, had been elected Party leader as a compromise candidate after the declaration of independence in September 1991. Like Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan, another scientist elected as a compromise leader, Shushkevich was weakened by his lack of political experience and connections within the *nomenklatura*.

In 1992, following the lead of the Russian Federation, the government introduced its own form of shock therapy. It liberalized most wholesale and retail prices and privatized many state enterprises. The result, as elsewhere in the post-Soviet era, was hyperinflation, and the economic free-fall soon generated a powerful political and popular reaction. Like Yeltsin, Shushkevich faced opposition to reform from members of the former Communist Party who dominated the Supreme Soviet. They made the same arguments as Yeltsin's opponents, demanding slower reform, increased protection for state enterprises, and the maintenance of subsidies to support pensions and keep consumer prices low. They also argued that the reforms of the *perestroika* era had destroyed a great state, and now threatened a new Time of Troubles, of chaos, corruption, and anarchy. In 1993, a year before he was elected President, Aliaksandr Lukashenka criticized "parliamentary anarchy, where everyone just talks, though nobody answers for anything or builds an effective vertical of state power with personal accountability."<sup>14</sup> Such ideas resonated widely, particularly in Lukashenka's milieu of middle-level officials who had risen to power in the Brezhnev era.

In Belarus, unlike Russia, the conservative wing of the ruling elite won the standoff over economic reforms. By 1994, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, a former political outsider and one-time director of a collective farm, had emerged as a leader of the conservatives, and the Prime Minister, Kebich, sought his support both in bringing down Shushkevich and in boosting his own bid for the presidency. Lukashenka first gained prominence as head of an anti-corruption committee appointed by Shushkevich, who soon became one of its main targets. In 1994, in Belarus's only competitive election of a leader (though all sides used dirty tricks), Lukashenka was elected President on a wave of popular hostility to the existing leadership and pro-Soviet nostalgia provoked by the difficulties of economic reform. His successful populist campaign slogan was "Neither with the left nor with the right, but with the people." It may be that his *nomenklatura* rival, Kebich, simply failed to use the many resources at his disposal to manage the election successfully, a lesson Yeltsin may have taken to heart during Russia's 1996 election.

Once in power, Lukashenka proved unmovable, and he remains President at the time of going to press (2017). A new 1994 constitution had already increased the powers of the President, but a 1996 referendum would give Lukashenka almost dictatorial powers, including the right to dissolve parliament. Constitutional referenda in 1995 and 1996 gave the President the power

to appoint judges to the constitutional court, to appoint to the electoral commission, and to choose members of the upper chamber. Since 1996 the parliament of Belarus has lost any significant role in politics. Lukashenka has largely taken control of the mass media, sometimes using violence and intimidation, and there have been occasional suspicious disappearances of opponents and journalists.<sup>15</sup>

Market reforms were abandoned, including a 1993 plan for privatization, which was dropped when privatization vouchers had already been distributed. In November 1994, just months after his election, Lukashenka announced on television that he intended to work with the kind of economy he understood, which was a planned economy.<sup>16</sup> Price controls were reintroduced, and by the end of the 1990s Belarus had one of the smallest private sectors of all the post-Soviet republics; in 2010, only *c.*30 percent of GDP came from the private sector.<sup>17</sup> Most of Belarus's trade is still with Russia and other former Soviet republics. Particularly important have been subsidized Russian supplies of gas and oil. Like Vladimir Putin, but considerably earlier, Lukashenka consolidated the power of the central government by clipping the wings of oligarchs. Aliaksandr Pupeik, the richest of the Belarusian oligarchs, and head of the country's largest single business, was driven into exile in 1998.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the end of economic reforms, the country's economy did not collapse, and levels of economic corruption remained lower than in most other republics. Lukashenka's personal popularity seems to have remained high. He consistently argued for the rebuilding of a new version of the Soviet Empire, and made several attempts to form a closer union with Russia. In 1995, a new treaty allowed Russian troops to stay on Belarus's territory and created open economic borders between the two countries, while later agreements allowed Belarus to purchase Russian oil and gas cheaply, and wrote off large Belarusian debts. One element in his popularity may be the maintenance of a highly subsidized welfare system, similar to that of the Soviet era.<sup>19</sup> That may explain why Belarus's GINI coefficient has never risen about 30, in contrast to Russia, where it rose to 48 in the 1990s before falling back to about 40 (Table 18.3). But the building of a strong and stable central government has also contributed to his popularity.

The reason why the population supported Lukashenka cannot be explained simply by economic development and stability, but also by the perception of a strong leader whose actions are justified by ensuring the defense from the country's enemies, internally in the form of the opposition and externally in the form of the West and NATO. Here, the economic element coupled with fear of changes perfectly correlates with the Soviet narrative of protecting its population from the "rotten West" and providing the people with all basic needs.<sup>20</sup>

Lukashenka's strong rule resonated widely with a population that still shared many of the core values of the Soviet era: strong, stable government, limited inequality, and a powerful welfare net.<sup>21</sup> Lukashenka has proved extremely successful at building support both within the Belarusian elite and within society

at large, and in many ways his rule demonstrates the continued viability of traditional statist methods of rule and economic management in the post-Soviet era.

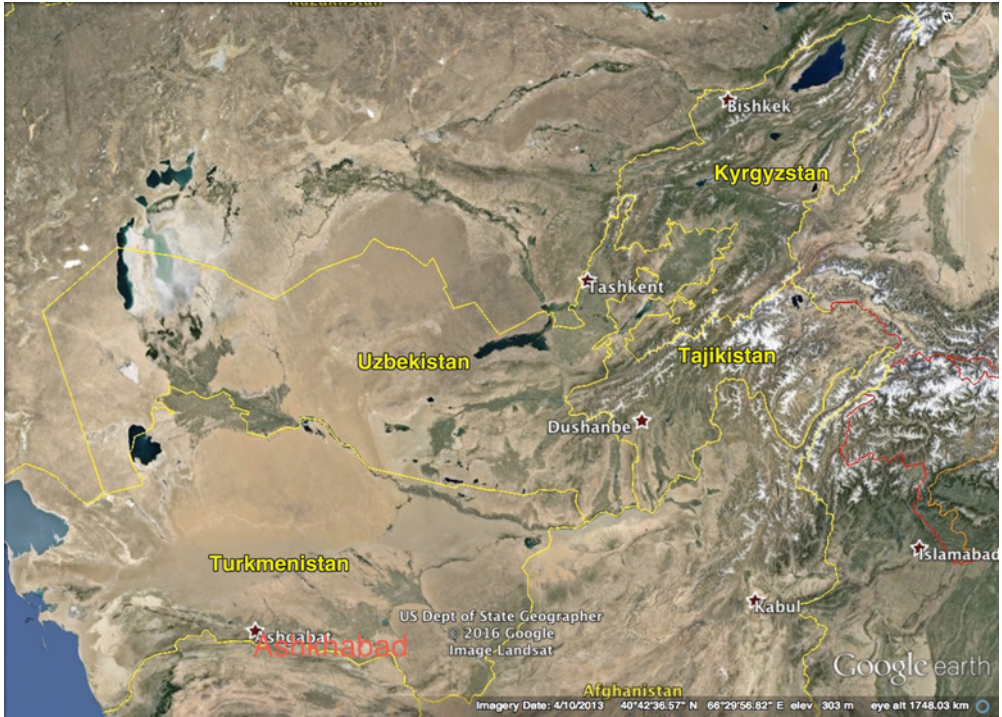
## *KAZAKHSTAN, CENTRAL ASIA, AND AZERBAIJAN: 1991–2000*

Like the history of Belarus, the history of post-Soviet Inner Eurasian republics in central Inner Eurasia illustrates the durability of traditional centralist methods of rule and economic management in societies where there was little elite or popular enthusiasm for radical economic or political reform.

At a summit meeting in Tashkent in January 1993, the term Central Asia was formally adopted as a designation for Kazakhstan and Transoxiana by all five states described in this section: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Map 19.3 and 19.4).<sup>22</sup> After 1991, it also makes sense to include Azerbaijan with this group of states, because their cultural and historical trajectories had much in common. Kazakhstan is by far the largest of these states, making up almost two thirds of the area of Central Asia, while Uzbekistan is the most populous, with almost 25 million inhabitants.



**Map 19.3** Google Earth map of Kazakhstan.



**Map 19.4** Google Earth map of Transoxiana.

National borders now criss-cross a region that was previously part of a single Soviet political space. And that makes regional collaboration more difficult than in the past. For example, little has been done to deal with the huge environmental problems of the Aral Sea region, which affect Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. The coerced collaboration of the Soviet era has been replaced by commercial and political competition between regional polities, so studying Central Asia’s history after 1991 means studying it nation by nation. However, there has been some regional cooperation on security issues involving China, through the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization” or SCO. Founded in 1996, this brought together states that shared a border with China: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; Uzbekistan joined in 2001. Originally brought together to deal with border disputes and share information on Islamic fundamentalism, that organization may eventually generate new forms of regional collaboration. In 2014, a new Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) was created, linking Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. First proposed by Nursultan Nazarbaev in 1994, it has ambitious plans for economic integration, similar to the EU, but to date (2017) progress has been very limited.

The new republics of Central Asia faced similar challenges after 1991, and their shared past within the Soviet Union ensured they would approach them in similar ways. None had strong opposition movements or democratic

traditions, so Soviet-era elites remained in office, bringing with them Soviet habits of governance. Even regional nationalisms had been forged largely during the Soviet era, though new symbols and national histories would soon appear, based on pre-Soviet historical and cultural traditions. There was much in the Soviet legacy that new nations could build on. All the Central Asian republics inherited high educational levels and significant, if lopsided, industrial sectors designed primarily to exploit their main agrarian and industrial resources. By 1991 they were all quite urbanized (except for Tajikistan); levels of urbanization ranged from 35–60 percent. They also inherited strong state structures that survived more or less intact (though they broke down for a time in Tajikistan). But Marxist ideology vanished, and Soviet-era elites began to align themselves cautiously with Muslim religious and cultural traditions as they sought new forms of legitimacy.

At first, the influence of Russia and of Russians really mattered. Most of the new leaders had been members of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, and all were profoundly Russified. With the exception of Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan, the first Presidents of the Central Asian republics were all former Communist Party First Secretaries, and most sympathized with the goals of the August 1991 coup.<sup>23</sup> Akaev was the only regional leader to openly oppose the coup. Russian influence was particularly important in Kazakhstan, almost 40 percent of whose population was Russian in 1991, and in Kyrgyzstan, 21 percent of whose population was Russian. In both republics, it was the northern regions and the largest cities that were most Russianized. In Tajikistan, the government would depend for several years on Russian and CIS troops to defend itself against internal opponents and armed Islamic incursions from Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup>

But Russian military, cultural, demographic, and economic influence waned as the Central Asian republics developed new international economic and diplomatic ties, and as many Russians left Central Asia for the Russian Federation. Ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the USA, the US government negotiated agreements with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan allowing it to establish military bases. In December 2002, Russia had to negotiate separately to establish a base of its own in Kyrgyzstan, not far from the newly established US military base. Here was a powerful reminder that the Soviet Empire really had ended in 1991, despite continuing Russian economic and political influence throughout Central Asia.

During the era of *perestroika*, Central Asian politicians and managers had faced a flood of new edicts from the center, on the management of enterprises, on press censorship, and on the changing role of the Party. But real change was limited, and *perestroika* and *glasnost* generated none of the ferment of debate that energized intellectuals and politicians in Moscow, Leningrad, and other major Russian cities. Nevertheless, the slow relaxation of the center's grip did release pent-up resentments. When Gorbachev replaced the Kazakh leader Dinmukhamed Kunaev with a Russian, Gennadi Kolbin, in December 1986, he was shocked that what had seemed a minor bureaucratic reshuffle provoked violent riots in Almaty, during which several people were killed. In Ferghana, which had an exceptionally diverse population, partitioned awkwardly between

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan by some of the most arbitrary of the Soviet-era boundaries, there were ethnic riots in Uzbek regions in 1989. As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, ethnic violence was often fueled by local economic decline and competition for jobs and housing, sometimes exacerbated by the arrival of refugees from other regions. In 1990 there were even more violent riots in Osh, in Kyrgyz Ferghana, and also in Dushanbe, the capital of nearby Tajikistan.

But most Central Asian elites did not engage actively in the reform discussions of the *perestroika* era, and they shared the hostility to reform of the middle and lower levels of Soviet officialdom. Local populations shared their lack of enthusiasm. In the All-Union referendum on the maintenance of the Soviet Union organized in March 1991, over 90 percent of voters in the Central Asian republics voted to retain the Union.<sup>25</sup>

After independence, all Central Asian states rebuilt centralized political systems with strong Presidents, weak parliamentary systems, and regular but highly managed elections, systems similar in many ways to the former Soviet Union, in which the new nations had been incubated. Most of the new rulers continued to rely on networks forged within the *nomenklatura*, and on the highly personal clan networks developed in the late Soviet era, like the long-serving Central Asian leaders of the Brezhnev era. Four of the Central Asian polities – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan – have proved remarkably stable and resilient. The personal nature of rule in all four states explains why they have often been caricatured as modern “Sultanates.” Centralizing trends also appeared in Kyrgyzstan, which seemed in the early 1990s to be moving towards radical democratic and market reform under Askar Akaev.

Culturally, the most important change in Central Asia was the revival of Islamic culture and traditions, which had been formally suppressed during much of the Soviet era, but flourished informally. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new mosques and Muslim educational institutions opened. Increasing contacts with Afghanistan and the non-Soviet Muslim world allowed in new Muslim ideas and approaches, including more militant forms of Islam. In Kazakhstan, where Islamic traditions revived more slowly than in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, there were 63 legal mosques in 1989, and 230 by 1991.<sup>26</sup> All the new leaders in the region would align themselves to some degree with Muslim historical and cultural traditions, which they also incorporated within new forms of nationalism. New national myths and legends were constructed with considerable care and thought, in an attempt to turn the somewhat artificial “nations” of the Soviet era into modern nation-states that could inspire broad popular loyalty.

Saparmurat Niazov had been First Secretary of the Turkmen Communist Party since 1985. He was elected as President in 1990, became head of independent Turkmenistan in 1992, and ruled for 16 years before dying of a heart attack in 2006.<sup>27</sup> He appointed himself President for life, built a cult of personality as florid as any in the modern era, assumed the title of “Turkmenbashi” or “Father of the Turkmen people,” erected golden statues of himself (one rotated constantly to face the sun), wrote himself into the national anthem, and even renamed the month of January after himself. He also tortured and imprisoned

his opponents, and built a huge personal fortune derived largely from oil and natural gas revenues. The system he built proved remarkably stable, and when he died, power was inherited smoothly by Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, who continues to rule at the time of going to press (2017).

In Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov had also been a career communist. He was First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party from 1989, became the new President in 1990, and ruled until his death in 2016. After the August 1991 coup attempt in Moscow, which Karimov probably supported, the Uzbek Supreme Soviet declared that Uzbekistan had become the Independent Republic of Uzbekistan.<sup>28</sup> In December 1991, Karimov was re-elected President. At the time, there still existed some independent political groupings including *Birlik* (Unity) and *Islam Lashkari* (Islamic forces).

The civil war in neighboring Tajikistan gave Karimov the justification he needed to concentrate power in his own hands. From January 1992 he personally appointed the *Khokim*, or regional governors of the 12 main regions. A December 1992 constitution extended the President's powers, and in December 1994, a new parliamentary body, the *Oliy Majilis*, replaced the former Supreme Soviet. Like Soviet parliamentary bodies, it meets rarely, and only to approve government laws. Karimov turned the Communist Party into the "People's Democratic Party," and it became a firm supporter of the President's authority. He also launched a distinctive brand of nationalism focusing on the achievements both of former Soviet-era leaders of Uzbekistan, in particular Sharaf Rashidov, and on the exploits of Timur, whose statue replaced that of Karl Marx in central Tashkent.<sup>29</sup>

Together, these policies have produced a highly authoritarian regime hinged upon the almost unlimited powers of the president. President Karimov has made ruthless use of the security forces to crush opposition and the media are tightly controlled by the state. Beneath a thin veneer of democratic practices and institutions, political power is wielded in an indiscriminate and unchecked fashion.<sup>30</sup>

After Russia, Kazakhstan was the second largest of the Soviet republics, roughly the size of western Europe. It had significant resources in coal, metal ores (mainly in the north), and oil and gas (mainly in the west, on the shores of the Caspian Sea). It inherited a well-educated population with literacy rates of 98 percent, almost 60 percent of its population lived in towns, it had a large farmed area, and a modest industrial base. It was briefly a nuclear power, before agreeing in 1995 to give up its nuclear weapons in a deal brokered by the USA between Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev also made a smooth transition from Party First Secretary to President. He had been Prime Minister under Kunaev, then became First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party in 1989 after the removal of Gorbachev's controversial appointee, Gennadi Kolbin. Nazarbaev became President in 1990 and the former Supreme Soviet became the national parliament or *majlis*. In July 1990, Nazarbaev was elected a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as were Saparmurat Niazov and Islam Karimov. While using the democratic rhetoric of the



*perestroika* era, and committed, like Gorbachev, to market reforms, Nazarbaev argued for what he called a “strong Presidential Republic,” on the grounds that a strong center would be needed during a period of difficult economic and political change. The first constitution of independent Kazakhstan, introduced at the end of 1992, reflected Nazarbaev’s centralist approach.

Politically, Nazarbaev proved as conservative and as adept at managing parliamentary institutions as Niazov and Karimov. In 1993, conflicts emerged over the pace of economic reforms between the President and parliament, as in Russia. In October 1993, soon after the forced closure of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Nazarbaev dissolved the Kazakh parliament and called for new elections. When he failed to achieve a majority in 1994, the elections were declared null by the Constitutional Court. Nazarbaev ruled by decree until new elections gave him a majority in December 1995, and a referendum supported a new constitution that weakened the powers of the parliament and the judiciary. By 1997, Nazarbaev had taken over the one remaining independent newspaper, *Karavan*, and squeezed out the country’s remaining independent radio and television stations by the simple expedient of demanding extraordinarily high license fees.<sup>31</sup> From 1997 a reorganization of the provinces gave the center a stronger grip on its regions. In an attempt to consolidate the government’s grip on the more Russified and urbanized northern parts of the country, Nazarbaev eventually moved the capital from Kazakhstan’s largest city, Almaty, to Astana in the north-east. Formerly known as Akmolinsk when founded as a Russian fort in 1832, then as Tselinograd from 1960–1992, and Akmola from 1992–1998, the city was renamed once more as Astana, or “capital city,” in 1998. At the same time, Kazakh was made the national language, finally resolving long debates, similar to those in Ukraine, about whether the republic should be a federal or a unitary state.<sup>32</sup>

By the late 1990s, Kazakhstan, too, was a highly centralized presidential republic, dominated by the personal authority of the President and his family. As a 2009 essay puts it:

Now Kazakhstan has a political system centered around today’s president and his family. His relatives and close, faithful lieutenants monopolize the key positions of the state. His elder daughter is chair of the Board of Directors of the chief Government TV channel. Her husband was chief of the Tax Police and deputy chair of the Committee on National Security. The president’s second son-in-law has very entrenched interests in the oil business and officially holds the second highest position in the national oil company.<sup>33</sup>

Nazarbaev’s main achievement has been to avoid serious ethnic conflict in a country which, at the time of independence, had more Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians (44 percent) than Kazakhs (40 percent) as well as other significant minority groups, including 5 percent of German ancestry.<sup>34</sup> In 1990, Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote an essay arguing that northeastern Kazakhstan should become part of Russia, an idea that resonated with many Russians in Kazakhstan.<sup>35</sup> Defusing such tensions complicated the task of developing a new Kazakh nationalism. The history of modern Ukraine suggests the care

needed to manage such an ethnic balance, though in Central Asia as a whole, declining birth rates among the Slavic population and accelerating emigration since the 1980s eventually reduced the Slavic populations from about one third in the 1970s to about 15 percent today. The 1999 census confirmed that Kazakhs now constituted the majority of the republic's population.<sup>36</sup>

In foreign policy, Kazakhstan, like all the non-Russian PSIERs, has had to forge new international ties to replace Soviet-era links to Moscow. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan leased the Baikonur cosmodrome to Russia, and actively sought close economic links with Russia. Nazarbaev justified such ties with a rhetoric based on a pragmatic Kazakhstani version of "Eurasianism," stressing the shared histories and traditions of Turks and Russians in Inner Eurasia.<sup>37</sup> But Nazarbaev also built new economic and political ties, particularly with China and the USA, as Kazakhstan sought new ways of profiting from its resource wealth through a "multivector foreign policy."

In Azerbaijan, Heidar Aliiev, who had been the republic's leader between 1969 and 1982, became President in October 1993 after a chaotic interval dominated by violent internal conflicts and war with Armenia. Aliiev created a strong, conservative regime that was inherited by his son, Liham Aliiev, after Aliiev's death in October 2003. Azerbaijan's politics has been dominated by the economics of fossil fuels. The discovery in the 1980s of large new reserves of oil, and the discovery of large reserves of natural gas in the 1990s, eased the task of building a new state, fueled a very fast economic recovery, and reduced pressure for either market reforms or democratic reforms.

In the more mountainous republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (mountains make up more than 90 percent of both countries), complex ethnic and regional divisions undermined attempts to build strong states. In both republics, there were long-standing divisions between Turkic-speaking Uzbeks and Persian-speaking Tajiks, while clan rivalries limited the power of the center. The other fault line that would drive wedges through the elite and between regions was that between Russified former communists, with limited sympathy for traditional forms of religion, and those regions, mostly in more rural or isolated areas, where Islam provided the dominant form of legitimation.

Of all the Soviet Central Asian republics, Tajikistan had the least favorable prospects as an independent territorial state. When created in 1929 from what had previously been an Autonomous Republic within Uzbekistan, it lost its two main cities, Bukhara and Samarkand, to Uzbekistan, along with 300,000 of Central Asia's 1.1 million Tajiks. The most significant ethnic divide is between Tajiks, whose language is a form of Persian, and Uzbeks, whose language is Turkic. Today, almost two thirds of the population is Tajik, but Uzbeks account for almost a quarter, most of them in Tajikistan's part of the Ferghana valley. Mountainous territories in the Pamir and Tianshan mountain ranges, and a long and porous border with Afghanistan, ensured the survival of particularly strong local, clan, and ethnic loyalties.<sup>38</sup> The loss of subsidies from the Soviet federal government impoverished Tajikistan, and encouraged regional and tribal conflicts over the new state's limited resources. Lack of funds made it impossible to develop the country's modest reserves of gold, uranium, oil, and natural gas.

Tajikistan's first President, Rahmon Nabiev, had been the country's second to last communist First Secretary, but he lost power after the country disintegrated into a civil war that lasted from 1992–1997. Captured in September 1992, he was forced to resign as President. In November 1992, he was replaced by another long-time member of the Communist Party, the speaker of the Tajik Supreme Soviet, Emomali Rahmon (born Imomali Rahmonov). The civil war was fought initially between former communists and their Islamic opponents. But it was complicated and fueled by many other regional and clan conflicts. Russian and CIS troops were soon involved in the conflict, defending a government very like those that had emerged in the other Central Asian republics. Russia and Tajikistan's neighbors were particularly keen to police the border with Afghanistan in order to limit the spread of fundamentalist Islam.

By some estimates, the civil war may have caused as many as 100,000 deaths. It ended in 1997, when the UN helped negotiate a peace accord between the government and its pro-democratic and Islamic opponents, but sporadic violence persisted for a long time. In 1999, Rahmon was re-elected with a suspiciously high 96 percent of the vote. The collapse into civil war was a warning to all other republican elites, like the civil war in former Yugoslavia, of how fast power could unravel in new polities. To date (2017), Rahmon has survived in office for almost a quarter of a century.

Alone of the Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan gained independence under a leader who had not been a professional Communist Party official. Askar Akaev was a scientist, from the more Russified northern regions of Kyrgyzstan, who had lived for many years in Moscow, and had a genuine interest in democratic and market reforms. He was elected President in October 1991 after the elimination of two other candidates, both career politicians, who failed to gain majority support. Perhaps because of his long residence in Moscow, the heart of *perestroika*-era debates on reform, Akaev supported market reform and privatization, and took significant early steps towards political and economic reform. He also tried hard to prevent the emigration of the country's largely Russian intelligentsia. But economic decline and the 1993 constitution, which made Kyrgyz the country's state language, ensured that here, as in Kazakhstan, many Russians would leave.

For a while, it seemed as if a viable market-oriented democracy might emerge in Kyrgyzstan. In retrospect, it is clear that Akaev's goals were shared by only a minority within the Kyrgyz elite.<sup>39</sup> And he himself lacked political experience and the political networks that might have allowed him to force through reform policies. Like Yeltsin in Russia, he faced opposition to his reform program from former communists within the Kyrgyz Communist Party, and felt obliged to revise the constitution to increase his own powers as President. But he failed to overcome regional differences within the elite, particularly between those from the Russified northern regions, which are divided by high mountains from the Turkic-speaking and more Islamic southern regions, and the Ferghana valley. In 2005, Akaev was overthrown during the so-called "Tulip" Revolution. His successor, Kurmanbek Bakiev, would fall in a similar revolution in 2010 to be succeeded by Central Asia's first woman president, Rosa Otunbayeva, who

had been one of the leaders of the “Tulip Revolution.” Otunbayeva served as President only until 2011.

The failure of Akaev’s attempts at reform, which were by far the most serious attempts in Central Asia, suggests the very real difficulty of introducing democratic market reforms under the conditions prevailing in post-Soviet Central Asia. In Central Asia, as in Russia, democratizing reforms weakened states, undermined their power to undertake decisive reforms, and created new ways of expressing underlying ethnic and political conflicts, while economic reforms generated widespread discontent.<sup>40</sup>

In much of Central Asia, the political challenge was not to create new political institutions, because most Soviet political institutions (with the exception of the Communist Party itself) continued to function, often under new names. More difficult was the task of creating new forms of loyalty and a new sense of legitimacy. Though many regions of Central Asia had historical traditions older than Russia itself, territorially organized states were a new phenomenon in the region, though in embryonic forms they had existed within the Soviet Union, and the Soviet practice of issuing national passports had begun to familiarize many with the new national identities. After 1991, all the new states found they would have to build new forms of legitimacy based on new national myths.

In both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, whose titular ethnicities did not constitute a clear majority of society, rulers opted at first for “de-ethnicized” or multi-ethnic national identities. But eventually, even these states opted for single state languages. Building new national myths in a region of multiple, overlapping ethnic, historical, and cultural traditions turned out to be a complex process that created odd ambiguities and contradictions. Should Kazakh become the national language of Kazakhstan if almost half of the country was of Russian origin? Could Tajikistan claim the Samanid ruler, Ismail Samani, as a national hero, even if his capital in Bukhara and most of his former empire lay within Uzbekistan? Could the Turkmen claim ancient rights over their land if the historic Turkmen were in fact pastoralist invaders of the Middle Ages? And to what extent could the Soviet-era politicians who now ruled the post-Soviet republics reject the Soviet heritage?<sup>41</sup> Easier to deal with were symbols of nationhood because these could be interpreted in many different ways. Turkmenistan has developed a new cult of the horse; Kyrgyzstan has built a cult around Lake Issyk Kul; cotton has become a symbol of Uzbek statehood; in Tajikistan, official nationalism is about mountains; in Kazakhstan it is about steppes.<sup>42</sup>

In Central Asia, for the most part, economic reforms have taken second place to nation building. Indeed, Nursultan Nazarbaev argued, in a textbook version of the “Chinese model” of reform, that it was important to give political reform priority over economic reform.<sup>43</sup> And, to the surprise of some market reformers, it turned out, as we have seen, that strong states did not necessarily mean poor economic performance. In Central Asia, as in most of the other PSIERs, the two major predictors of recovery and eventual growth were, first, the creation of stable state structures and, second, the availability of exportable resources.

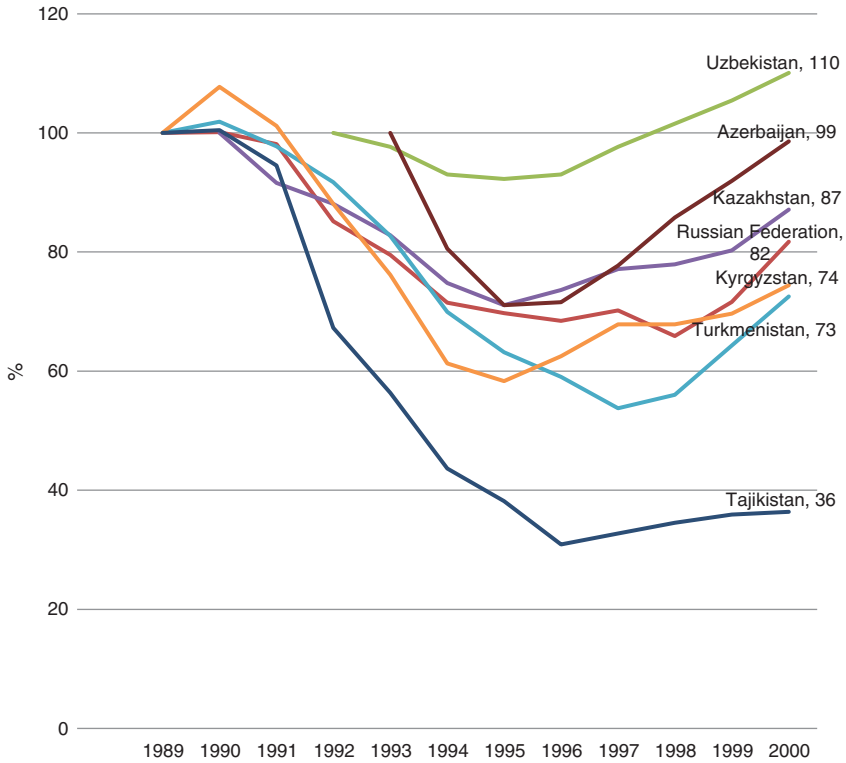
Initially, the breakup of the Soviet Union hurt all Central Asian economies by cutting long-established supply lines and removing Soviet-era subsidies. Railways, electricity networks, and pipelines had been built to link Central Asia to the Russian heartland, and they helped preserve many economic links even after independence. Kazakhstan's economy was particularly tightly bound to that of Russia. Most of Kazakhstan's industrial plants were under Moscow's control, and Kazakhstan had little understanding of their workings even months after independence. Nor was it always clear that the directors and largely Russian workforce of these plants would accept Kazakh government orders.

Kazakhstan sent 70 percent of its industrial production and mined products and 27 percent of its agricultural production to Russia. Russia received 100 percent of Kazakhstan's exports of iron ore, chrome ore, and aluminum; 95 percent of the republic's lead and phosphate fertilizer; 80 percent of its rolled metal, radio cables, aircraft wires, train bearings, tractors, and bulldozers; 75 percent of its cotton and silk; and 65 percent of its zinc and tin.

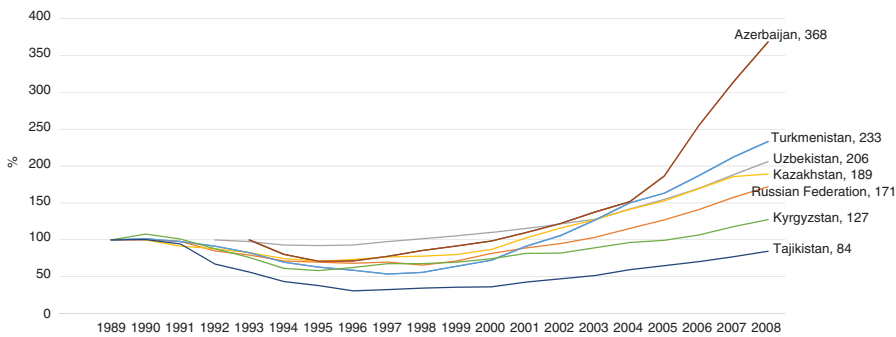
In return, most of Kazakhstan's imports of "cars, trucks, steel pipes, tires, lumber, paper, and most agricultural equipment" came from Russia.<sup>44</sup> Loosening these ties was itself an economic revolution. In addition, Russia's 1992 economic reforms affected prices and markets throughout the former Soviet Union. The emigration of large numbers of Russians and Ukrainians from the region amounted to a significant brain drain. As in all the PSIERs, production fell sharply, poverty levels rose, and so did inequality and corruption.

Most of Central Asia's new leaders showed limited interest in market reforms, except to the extent that they were forced on them by changes in the Russian republic. In Uzbekistan, Karimov resisted market reforms by capping prices and maintaining subsidies on many basic products. By 1993, according to World Bank estimates, subsidies and credits to enterprises in Uzbekistan amounted to 21 percent of GDP.<sup>45</sup> (On levels of privatization, see Figure 18.2.) Since then, levels of privatization have risen to about 45 percent of GDP, and many subsidies have been reduced, but many prices are still controlled and most farming is still managed by collective or state farms. In Turkmenistan, Niazov maintained an even higher level of state control and maintained subsidies to major state enterprises. In 2005, only 25 percent of Turkmenistan's GDP had been privatized. Yet neither economy collapsed, and Uzbekistan, in particular, maintained higher levels of output than most PSIERs, and kept earning significant revenues from cotton exports. In Turkmenistan, output fell to about 60 percent of the 1989 level, but then recovered fast, buoyed by exports of oil and gas. Autocratic rule in both countries maintained greater institutional continuity than in Russia, and, though levels of corruption remain high, the state itself retained control over most forms of large-scale rent-seeking. By 2008, per capita GNI in both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan was double the level for 1989 (Figures 19.3 and 19.4).

Economically, Nazarbaev was close to Gorbachev and that may be why he committed earlier and faster than most other Central Asian leaders to



**Figure 19.3** Changing GNI of Central Asian republics, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.



**Figure 19.4** Changing GNI of Central Asian republics, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

economic reforms. In 1992, most wholesale and retail prices were liberalized and privatization began, but the government retained control over exports. A second round of privatization began in 1993, using vouchers. Agriculture and livestock farming were privatized under laws passed in 1995. A serious economic crisis in 1996 led to a new round of privatization. The government also began to privatize larger enterprises, many of which were sold to foreign companies. By 1997, Kazakhstan was attracting more foreign investment than any of the other PSIERs.<sup>46</sup> But market reforms would stall at this stage, when about 65 percent of the Kazakh economy was being generated from the private sector, a level similar to that of Russia. As in other resource-rich PSIERs, increasing revenues from oil and natural gas reduced the pressure for further market reforms. However, as in Turkmenistan and Russia itself, Kazakhstan's overall economic performance has been impressive, particularly since the increase in oil prices at the end of the 1990s. By 2008 Kazakhstan's GNI per capita was almost double the level in 1989.

More than 20 years after the Soviet Union fell apart, it is clear that the Central Asian economies that recovered least well were those of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In both, total production still hovers around the levels for 1989. Weak governments slowed recovery in both states. In Kyrgyzstan, ethnic and regional tensions have created political instability, which ensured political and economic drift after aggressive early attempts at economic reform. In Tajikistan, civil war and the loss of Soviet subsidies in what was already the poorest of the Soviet Central Asian republics help explain why the economic decline was more severe than in any of the other PSIERs, and the recovery was slower. In 2002, 80 percent of the Tajik population lived below the poverty line.<sup>47</sup> Market reforms have been ad hoc and limited; in 2007, less than 60 percent of the Tajik economy was in private hands, and most large enterprises and collective reforms are still managed by the government. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Tajikistan has achieved some political stability. But it remains impoverished and autocratic, and economic reforms have made little impact, while the government lacks the funds needed to develop the country's significant resource wealth.

In Central Asia, as in most post-Soviet republics, there turned out to be no simple correlation between democratization and economic growth. In the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, at opposite ends on the scale of privatization, both suffered declines in output below 70 percent, and a slow recovery. The Central Asian societies whose economies recovered best were those with strong governments and exportable resources: Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

## *XINJIANG*

Xinjiang shared many historical, cultural, and geographical similarities with the formerly Soviet regions of Central Asia. Its north shared many cultural and geographical features with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and its southern regions, in the Tarim basin, had much in common with Transoxiana. But, after

a chaotic period of independence in the first half of the twentieth century, in the second half of the century its history was shaped overwhelmingly by decisions taken in Beijing. Real modernization began here only with the modernizing reforms of Deng Xiaoping, and Xinjiang did not really enter the fossil fuels era until the 1990s.<sup>48</sup> Its modernization had been delayed, like that of much of China, during the chaotic years of Mao's rule. In the late 1970s, Xinjiang was barely any wealthier or more modernized than in 1950.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 helped accelerate economic growth by ending Xinjiang's status as a fortified border region. Xinjiang's western borders began to open in the 1980s. In 1983, trucks were allowed to enter Kazakhstan through the Ili valley and in 1987 the new Karakoram highway linked Kashgar to Pakistan, while in 1990, a new rail line was completed between Urumqi and Almaty. After 1990, border trade increased rapidly. Most of the cross-border trade was controlled by the Xinjiang government, but increasing numbers of Uighur also engaged in private trade both abroad and in China itself, creating the beginnings of a new Uighur middle class. The region's railway network was finally developed; only in 1999 was Kashgar linked by rail to China. Between 1993 and 1995 the Taklamakan Desert Highway was built, running north–south through the Taklamakan desert. With massive inputs of water and fertilizers, cotton production increased by almost 30 times between 1978 and 1998, while the acreage under cotton doubled.<sup>49</sup>

By the 1990s, Xinjiang was also producing significant amounts of fossil fuel energy. Prospecting for oil had begun as early as the 1890s, but serious extraction began in the 1940s, in the era of Sheng Shicai, with the help of Soviet technicians. The major Karamay ("black oil") field in northern Zungharia was opened in 1955. Xinjiang also produces natural gas, which is now piped to China. Given China's limited supplies of oil and gas, and the vulnerability of shipments of Middle Eastern oil, which pass through the straits of Malacca, such domestic sources are extremely important to China, which has been willing to pay high prices to develop them. But though economic development in Xinjiang has been rapid, foreign investment has been limited, and in 2004, 80 percent of the region's industry was still state-owned. So, as in the eighteenth century, Xinjiang is still a drain on the budget of the Chinese heartland; by some estimates it costs 20 percent more than it earns.<sup>50</sup> Although China clearly controls Xinjiang in its own interests, modern Xinjiang also benefits from massive Chinese subsidies.

Much Chinese investment has been in support of increased production of raw materials and energy. Massive irrigation projects and the building of new canals and *karez*, or underground water channels, have increased the area being farmed to 3.4 million hectares. But here, as in Soviet Central Asia, over-irrigation is causing ecological damage and approaching the limits of what is available from rivers that originate from glaciers in the region's high mountains. The Tarim river now barely reaches its former terminus in Lop Nor, desertification is increasing as the water table is drawn down, and many of Turfan's *karez* are no longer functioning.<sup>51</sup>

Xinjiang has finally begun to *look* modern and to develop a modern consumerist culture. Bicycles, washing machines, and TVs have appeared even in



rural areas. Living standards are highest in the more urbanized Han-dominated regions of Zungharia. The Tarim basin, 95 percent of whose population is Uighur, has a per capita income half that of Xinjiang as a whole.<sup>52</sup> Zungharia, like Kazakhstan, has attracted large numbers of migrants from the imperial heartland, but in Xinjiang, that migration is continuing, while in Transoxiana it has ceased. In Zungharia, Han migration is beginning to swamp the indigenous population. In 1947, Han and Hui made up about 5 percent of the population of Xinjiang and the Uighur 75 percent; by 2000, Han and Hui made up more than 40 percent of the population, which was almost as large a proportion as the Uighur.<sup>53</sup> Most of the Han and Hui populations have settled in the north, but increasing numbers are settling in the Tarim basin, many of them in segregated apartment complexes.

Their separateness highlights the fact that Chinese attempts to reduce the region's cultural distinctiveness have failed as decisively as Soviet attempts in Soviet Central Asia. The tenacious survival of Muslim traditions, increasing education, travel by local merchants and intellectuals, and increasing contact with the independent republics of Central Asia have all generated new forms of nationalism among the non-Han populations in Xinjiang. These, in turn, have provoked a backlash in Chinese policy, which has returned since the late 1990s to less tolerant cultural policies in the region. All the preconditions now exist for the emergence of a strong independence movement in Xinjiang, and since the 1990s there have been several terrorist incidents in the region, and many signs of increasing inter-ethnic tension. But so far, a combination of Chinese government repression and improving living standards in Xinjiang have prevented that movement from taking highly organized forms.

Alone among the large non-heartland regions of Inner Eurasia, Xinjiang remains a colony in the traditional sense, and the example of independent neighboring states will surely encourage some form of separatism. But, like Soviet Central Asian states in the late Soviet period, rapid economic growth and a continuation of subsidies from the heartland may reduce the pressure to break away from the Chinese Empire and allow forms of accommodation short of full independence. In fact, one way of interpreting recent events in Xinjiang is as evidence of an expanding Chinese informal empire. So rapid is the growth in Chinese economic power and influence that China is developing the beginnings of an informal empire in Central Asia, where Chinese armies with imperial aspirations first arrived in the first century BCE.

In 1996, China initiated the meetings that led to the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or SCO. Intended originally to deal with possible border conflicts, the meeting also took up the common problem of Islamic extremism. Since then, Central Asian republics have ended the training of Uighur militants on their territory and even handed over suspect militants to China. In 2001, after attempts on the life of the Uzbek President Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan joined the SCO. Intentionally or not, this organization has become a powerful source of Chinese influence in Central Asia. In combination with Chinese commercial projects such as the Kazakh/China oil pipeline first agreed to in 1997, the SCO represents "the greatest extension of Chinese power into Central Asia beyond the Pamirs since the Tang period."<sup>54</sup>

As China becomes an increasingly important market for Mongolian produce, too, it is clear that, while Russian imperialism in Inner Eurasia is on the retreat, Chinese quasi-imperialism in the region is advancing. By 2010, China was probably investing as much in Central Asia as Russia. But the “quasi” makes all the difference. Beyond China’s current borders, its imperialism depends on modern, market-dominated forms of mobilization rather than on the more direct forms of mobilization that dominated the era before fossil fuels.

## *MONGOLIA, 1985–2000: REFORM AND INDEPENDENCE*

Mongolia’s history in the 1990s is peculiarly interesting because it was the only PSIER in which a highly marketized economy evolved in the 1990s, along with relatively democratic political structures. Mongolia’s history suggests that, under slightly different circumstances, many of the other PSIERs might also have evolved along similar lines. What made the difference?

Curiously, Mongolia’s history in the 1990s is in some ways more similar to that of eastern Europe than to the other PSIERs. Like many East European countries, Mongolia already had a strong sense of national identity, many Mongolians welcomed the prospect of independence and reform, and there was considerable elite turnover. As in eastern Europe and the Russian heartland, serious discussion about reform began during the era of *perestroika*, and involved many educated Mongolians who were not strictly part of the political elite. Finally, Mongolia’s economy had been less tightly integrated into that of the Soviet Union, so that it was easier for Mongolia than for most other PSIERs to seek new sources of financial and technical aid from international aid agencies and countries outside the former Soviet Union.

Unlike most of the other PSIERs, Mongolia also experienced something of the ferment of debate that Russia experienced during the years of *perestroika*. In Mongolia, as in Russia, serious reform began after the removal of a former leader, Tsedenbal, in August 1984. With Soviet agreement, he was sacked on “medical grounds” while in the Soviet Union for medical treatment. His replacement, Jambyn Batmonkh, was not a Party apparatchik but the Rector of the Mongolian State University. In the late 1980s, Batmonkh committed to a Mongolian version of *perestroika*. He allowed some decentralization in economic decision making and a small increase in private livestock holdings. *Perestroika* (*öörchlön shinechlel*) was accompanied by *glasnost* (*il tod*). In 1988, newspapers began to criticize the command economy. In 1990, an essay by Batbayar (pseudonym “Baabar”), called “Don’t forget! If you forget you perish,” criticized Soviet rule over Mongolia in general.<sup>55</sup> The author had been educated in Poland, and his work reflected the dissident ideas circulating among Soviet and eastern European intellectuals. As in the Soviet republics and eastern Europe, nationalist sentiments re-emerged in public debate. One critic asked why Mongolian studies were better developed in the West or the Soviet Union than in Mongolia itself.<sup>56</sup> In 1988, proposals surfaced for multi-party elections and in 1989 a commission was set up to examine the purge era.

By 1990, it was already clear that many economic and technical ties with Moscow would be cut, and this would hurt Mongolia. Mongolia lost Soviet military protection and Soviet subsidies which, by some estimates, accounted for 30 percent of Mongolian GDP.<sup>57</sup> It lost Soviet investment and technical services, which were crucial to manufacturing and energy production, as well as subsidized supplies of oil and electricity, and large markets for meat and livestock produce. It also had to start paying in hard currency for Soviet imports. Inevitably, Mongolia began to seek other allies, and to look for new forms of financial and technological support.

The first major internal changes came in 1990. In Mongolia, unlike most of the other PSIERs, but like many countries in eastern Europe, reform was initiated by pressure from below the government elites. Pro-democracy demonstrations had begun on Ulaanbaatar's massive Sukhebaator square in December 1989, as the Soviet Empire in eastern Europe was collapsing. They were led by members of Mongolia's small intelligentsia, many of them educated in the Soviet Union or eastern Europe, and most with close ties to Mongolia's ruling elites. Teachers and students from the Mongolian National University played a crucial role. Large demonstrations were organized on December 10, International Human Rights Day, with goals and slogans borrowed from the ferment of ideas that had emerged in the 1980s among Soviet intellectuals. Typical of the leaders of the reform movement was Sanjaasürengiin Zorig, a lecturer at the National University, of Russian and Buriat parentage, who had graduated from Moscow State University, knew the ideas of dissident Soviet intellectuals, and was deeply committed to non-violent protest.<sup>58</sup> Demonstrators took up many of the core demands of the *perestroika* reforms. They demanded an end to one-party rule, increased respect for human rights, new elections, a free press, honest study of Mongolia's Soviet-era history, and the development of a socialist market.<sup>59</sup> A Mongolian rock band, "Bell," played at the demonstrations.

Government leaders were divided on how to react. The Tiananmen massacre just six months earlier, in June 1989, had shown the possibility and the dangers of violent repression, while the collapse of eastern European socialist governments at the end of 1989 showed that the Mongolian leadership could expect little support from Moscow if they used force. Demonstrations continued through the cold winter and spring, and an independent paper appeared, the first since 1921. In February 1990, demonstrators tore down a statue of Stalin in front of the State Library. On March 7, 10 leaders of the reform movement put on traditional robes and began a hunger strike in Sukhebaator square, where the temperature was  $-15^{\circ}$ . The gesture attracted large crowds of supporters. Workers at the Erdenet and Darhan factories went on strike and monks from the Gandan monastery joined the demonstrations. On March 9, having been advised by the Soviet government to negotiate with reformers, the Politburo agreed to resign and hold broadly based elections to the parliament, the "Great Khural," after 70 years of single-party rule.<sup>60</sup> Batmonkh was replaced as Party leader by Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat.

Since 1990, elections have been held regularly in Mongolia, government control of the media has been limited, demonstrations have become a regular

feature of political life, and from the late 1990s the country has been judged to be “free” by organizations such as Freedom House.<sup>61</sup> In 1992 a new constitution was introduced, with strong formal safeguards for civil and political rights. Increasing dependence on western allies and aid agencies may have limited any possible return to more authoritarian forms of rule. However, like the Ukrainian constitution, Mongolia’s left the relative powers of the President and Prime Minister uncertain, which has led to periods of political deadlock.<sup>62</sup>

In some ways, building stable state structures was easier in Mongolia than in the other PSIERS because of the lack of major geographical, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural divisions, and a strong sense of shared historical traditions. Religious freedom was re-established in 1990, and followed by a revival of Lamaist Buddhism, the reopening of many lamaseries, the founding of new ones, and a revival of religious education. The Dalai Lama took a strong interest in the revival of Mongolian Buddhism and visited the country. The Indian ambassador to Mongolia from 1990–2000, a lama from Ladakh, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, played a major role in the revival of traditional Buddhism.<sup>63</sup> Other religions also began to proselytize, including the Mormons. Mongolian nationalism revived, with Chinggis Khan as its symbolic focus. In 1992, Ulaanbaatar’s Lenin Avenue was renamed Chinggis Khan Avenue.<sup>64</sup>

All in all, it seemed that the pro-reform demonstrators had achieved some of their major goals with surprising ease. However, even in 1990 it was clear that the opposition movement, based mainly in Ulaanbaatar and recruited from Mongolia’s small intelligentsia, had shallow roots in the country as a whole. It was also divided. As a result, the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party would continue to play a major role in Mongolian politics, largely with the support of a rural population that suffered severely from the loss of socialist-era institutions such as the *negdels*, which had provided resources and protection as well as employment.

The opposition movement split into two main groups, representing the two main tendencies that had appeared in all the newly independent states. One group, associated with the new Mongolian Democratic Party, initially led by Davaadorjiin Ganbold, advocated shock therapy market reforms in the spirit of the Washington consensus. A second group, which included many members of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP), was skeptical of the benefits of shock therapy, and, like their counterparts in the other PSIERS, was keen to preserve many aspects of the command economy, including its broad welfare net and state direction of the economy within a “socialist market.” In Mongolia, in contrast to most of the other PSIERS, the balance tipped in favor of the market reformers for most of the 1990s because of the government’s increasing reliance on foreign aid agencies, western advisers, and donors such as the IMF and the Asian Development Bank.

But even the revived MPRP supported market reforms. In July 1990, the MPRP, which still enjoyed massive support in rural areas, won most of the seats in the first free elections, as well as c.60 percent of the popular vote. Ochirbat became the first President of the new Mongolia. Like Yeltsin, another former communist turned market radical, he would support rapid market reforms, and he recruited a pro-market reformer, Davaadorjiin Ganbold, as a Deputy

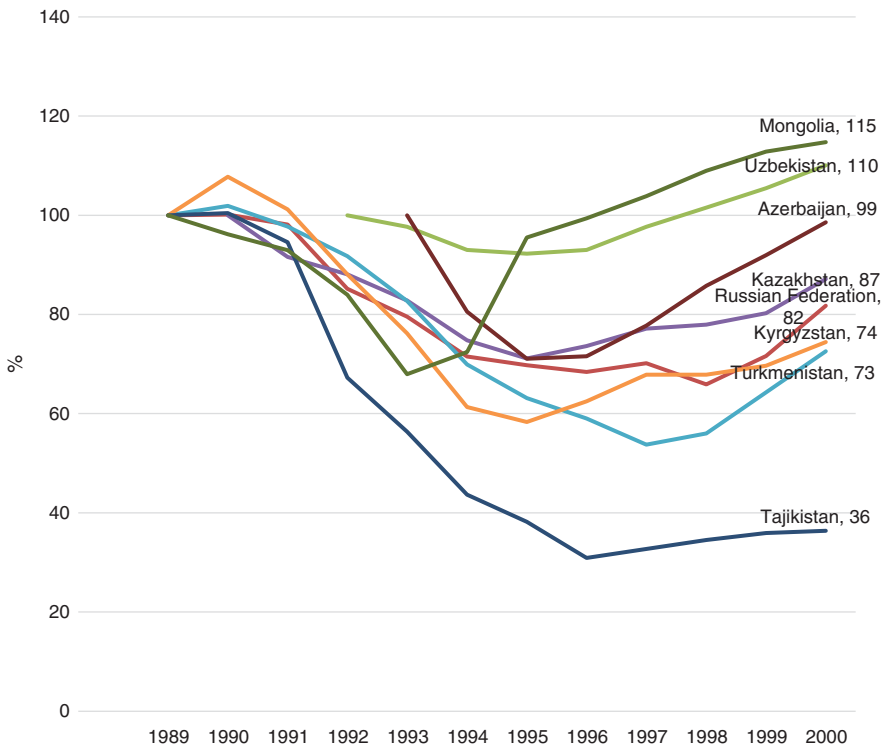
Premier to introduce the reforms. But the MPRP-dominated Khural criticized the most extreme forms of shock therapy.

In February 1991, the IMF, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank granted membership to Mongolia, making it eligible for credits and loans. But those loans were accompanied by demands for rapid marketization, the end of government subsidies, privatization and balanced budgets, and cuts in government spending and tariffs.<sup>65</sup> In 1991, the government launched a program of rapid privatization of livestock and enterprises, using a voucher scheme. Within two years, most small and middling enterprises had been privatized. But, as in the other PSIERs, vouchers were rapidly scooped up by traders, who began to concentrate ownership in their own hands.<sup>66</sup>

The lack of clear property and business laws, old traditions of favoring family networks in business decisions, declining official salaries, and the removal of traditional checks on corruption ensured that in Mongolia as in all the PSIERs, privatization and price liberalization would generate high levels of corruption. Prices were liberalized in 1992 and rose sharply. The government cut spending on welfare, health, education, as well as investment. Per capita income, as in many other PSIERs, dropped rapidly in the first half of the 1990s, particularly in smaller towns, before recovering in the second half of the 1990s. By 2000, Mongolia's per capita GNI was slightly above the 1990 level.<sup>67</sup> (Figures 19.5 and 19.6.)

The shock of rapid market reforms alienated the electorate. The 1992 elections suggested a widespread rejection of market reforms, and the new Prime Minister, Puntsagiin Jasrai, tried to preserve something of the socialist welfare net, while President Ochirbat tried to continue the policy of marketization. In 1996, a pro-western and pro-market coalition, the Democratic Coalition, was elected into power and the MPRP lost power for the first time since 1921. The Democratic Coalition launched a second round of market reforms, once again under the guidance of advisers from the West, western aid donors, and Mongolian pro-marketeters including Ganbold. In 1997, however, divisions within the Coalition and hostility over the harshness of some of the new reforms led to the election of an MPRP President, N. Bagabandi. This government also pressed on with market reforms, reducing the size of the government and the services it offered, and removing remaining subsidies on coal and electricity. It privatized housing by simply handing most apartments over to those living in them; and it eliminated most dues on imports. These reforms reduced government revenues significantly, increasing government reliance on indirect taxes such as the value added tax and on government bonds. By 1997, Mongolia had crossed the crucial threshold of price liberalization (Table 18.2) by removing most administered prices and most barriers to foreign trade. Members of the Democratic Coalition talked of erecting a statue to Milton Friedman in the capital.<sup>68</sup>

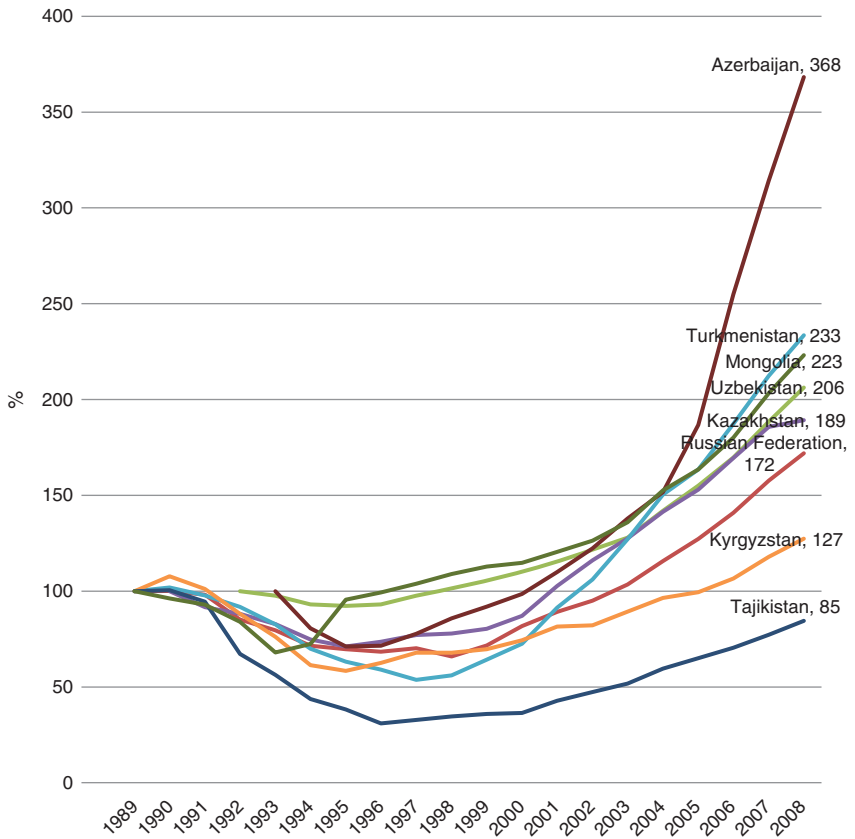
The social costs of reform were high. Corruption flourished, particularly in the banking system, which granted huge loans through personal connections and after limited checks on creditworthiness. By 1999, only 41 percent of loans were still "performing." As a Canadian journalist reported, "[M]ost Mongolians ... noted the suspiciously high proportion of Mercedes drivers and



**Figure 19.5** Changing GNI of Mongolia and Central Asian republics, 1989–2000 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

Italian-suit wearers among the MPs who earn less than \$100 a month. They ... read of the businesses registered to brothers and husbands and wives, of the children sent to college in the United States or Britain.”<sup>69</sup> The Mongolian Employers’ Confederation reported that 66 percent of its members admitted having offered bribes to officials (surely an underestimate). As Oyun of the Civil Will Party put it in 2001, “democracy has become a mechanism for making a few people rich.”<sup>70</sup>

Particularly hard hit were traditional herders. Though largely supportive of the MPRP, they had a limited voice in government; by 2004 only one herder had been elected to the Khural.<sup>71</sup> Between 1991 and 1993, as the *negdels* were privatized, their members were given coupons with which they could purchase shares. Some *negdels* survived as small businesses (like many Russian collective and state farms, which became “corporate farms” after privatization), and some herders pooled their resources to form cooperatives. But the general effect of reform was to divide the herding economy once more into individual households, most of which lacked the infrastructure, the protection, and many of the services that had been provided by monasteries and noble estates in the distant past, and by *negdels* in the communist period. Herders lost medical and



**Figure 19.6** Changing GNI of Mongolia and Central Asian republics, 1989–2008 as % of 1989 level. Based on Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 333, from World Bank figures. With permission of John Wiley & Sons.

veterinary services; trucks were no longer available to transport *gers* on longer migrations or to supply hay when fodder ran short. Even where tractors were available, the rising cost of fuel made it impossibly expensive to use them. David Sneath describes the example of three brothers who bought tractors during the privatization process, but found it almost impossible to use them productively, so they sat, forlornly, outside the brothers’ *gers*.

When the author first met the brothers in August 1996, they were preparing to cut hay by hand, despite the fact that they also had the mechanized grass-cutting attachments needed to do this by tractor. The main obstacle, they explained, was the expense and difficulty of running their tractors. Diesel was very expensive, as were spare parts (when they were obtainable at all).<sup>72</sup>

During the disastrous winters of 1999–2001, many herding families were ruined by sudden frosts (*dzhut*) that killed much of their livestock. Many gave up and left for the towns.

The effective wages of herders declined by 50 percent in just two years, and in 1994 it was claimed that 25 percent of the population lived below Mongolia's low poverty line.<sup>73</sup> Many of the poorest were former service workers on the *negdels*, who lacked livestock or experience of herding, but had taken up herding for lack of other employment. Paradoxically, this meant that, as the difficulties of herding increased, unemployment in other sectors forced more people to become herders, so the number of herding households increased from *c.*147,000 in 1990 to almost three times that number in 1998, though many had little experience or understanding of tending livestock. For women, the breakup of the *negdels* and the return to more traditional lifeways meant returning to a regime of hard, generalized labor, rather than the more specialized labor on the *negdels*. "They not only cook; sew; wash; produce butter, yogurt, and cheese; and care for children but also milk animals, cure hides, and make boots."<sup>74</sup>

Traditional industries based on livestock produce suffered from the difficulty of securing cheap loans and the removal of traditional state support and tariff protection. Exports of woolen blankets fell from 336,000 in 1990 to 4,500 in 2000; exports of carpets from 7 million sq. meters in 1990 to under 100,000 sq. meters in 2002; leather garment exports from 87,000 in 1990 to hardly any in 2002 and leather shoe exports from 4.8 million pairs of shoes in 1989 to 4,000 in 2000.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, with foreign support, Mongolia's resource sector began to expand, particularly the mining of coal, copper, and gold. Indeed, particularly in a relatively small national economy, earnings from the sale of resources could well generate a Mongolian form of "resource curse," as sales of resources benefit foreign investors, Mongolian oligarchs, and the Mongolian government, without generating much "trickle down" to the population as a whole.

Some Mongolians thrived, creating new forms of inequality. Mongolia produced its own oligarchs, such as Luvsanvandangiin Bold, who created the Bodi International Group and was elected to the Khural in 1996. Some pastoralists thrived, too. In 2002, about 600 herding households (out of a total of about 243,000) had more than 1,000 head of livestock, while 166,000, or over half, had less than 100.<sup>76</sup> Such changes threatened to recreate the rural inequalities of the feudal era, as wealthier herders began to hire extra labor and trucks and buy up reserves of fodder.

By the late 1990s, growing inequalities, massive corruption, the fact that a third of the population lived below Mongolia's low poverty line, and that growth remained sluggish, generated increasing criticism of market reforms. In 1998, even the new head of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, argued that donors had focused too much on economic stability, ignoring issues of social welfare. "The poor," he wrote, "cannot wait on our deliberations."<sup>77</sup> In 2000, the MPRP was re-elected to power, but the elite consensus and international pressure in favor of market reform were so powerful that the MPRP pushed on with market reforms. For example, while cashmere producers asked for tariffs on the export of raw cashmere, and government subsidies and low-interest loans, the IMF threatened to withdraw aid if the government conceded to these demands. No wonder the government listened to foreign donors who,



by 2002, were contributing more than 30 percent of Mongolia's GDP, which was comparable to the level of Soviet-era subsidies from Moscow.<sup>78</sup> Despite their scale, many argued that the strings attached to these donations were infringing Mongolian independence. Mongolians suspected that foreign businesses and banks were gouging Mongolian resources in partnership with Mongolian oligarchs. As a former minister put it in 2002, "The demands of the IMF, imposed in three directions, namely, to open the economy without limit, reduce the regulating role of the state almost to zero, then to balance the already poor budget has been not effective in creation of a market economy."<sup>79</sup>

Like many of the PSIERs, Mongolian consumers had traveled from a world of low prices, low rents, shortages, and queues to a world of abundant goods, most of which were too expensive for ordinary consumers. By the mid-1990s it was claimed that the wealthiest 20 percent of the population enjoyed 18 times the income of the poorest 20 percent.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, Mongolia's Gini coefficient did not rise above 33, keeping it below the Gini coefficients of the major resource-rich PSIERs such as Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. (See Table 18.3.)

How had the social structure of Mongolia changed? By 2000, over 50 percent of the population lived in cities, with about one third living in Ulaanbaatar; 49 percent of wage earners worked in rural areas, most as herders, and the rural sector produced a third of GDP; 14 percent worked in mining, manufacturing, construction, and retail and services.<sup>81</sup> A third of households still practiced herding, lived in *gers*, and engaged in periodic migrations, though some have access to electricity and many use trucks to transport their *gers*. A visitor from Chinggis Khan's time would no longer have recognized Mongolia, particularly the world of its cities, but might still have found some familiar sights among Mongolia's surviving herders and inside its *gers*.

## NOTES

- 1 Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 1.
- 2 Plokhy, *Gates of Europe*, 326.
- 3 Plokhy, *Gates of Europe*, 313–314; Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 58.
- 4 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 159.
- 5 Plokhy, *Gates of Europe*, 324–325.
- 6 Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 60.
- 7 Plokhy, *Gates of Europe*, 329.
- 8 Aslund, *How Ukraine became a Market Economy and Democracy*, 6.
- 9 Marples, "History and Politics in Post-Soviet Belarus," 27.
- 10 Wilson, *Belarus*, 121.
- 11 Wilson, *Belarus*, 133, 142.
- 12 Wilson, *Belarus*, 147.
- 13 Silitski, "Explaining Post-Communist Authoritarianism in Belarus," 37.
- 14 Wilson, *Belarus*, 140.
- 15 Vasilevich, "Authoritarianism," 94–95.
- 16 Wilson, *Belarus*, 170.
- 17 Lawson, "Path-Dependence and the Economy of Belarus," 126–129.

- 18 Wilson, *Belarus*, 164; and Aslund, *How Capitalism was Built*, 192.
- 19 Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 192.
- 20 Vasilevich, "Authoritarianism," 89.
- 21 Cited in Vasilevich, "Authoritarianism," 95.
- 22 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 11ff., describes the history of the terms Central Asia and Middle Asia.
- 23 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 9.
- 24 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 74–75.
- 25 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 52.
- 26 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 262.
- 27 What follows from Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 57ff.
- 28 Much of the following based on Melvin, *Uzbekistan*.
- 29 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 44–46.
- 30 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 30.
- 31 Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 25–27.
- 32 On Astana's various names, see Pohl, "The 'Planet of One Hundred Languages'," 239.
- 33 Ibadildin, "Oil and Authoritarianism in Kazakhstan," 118–119.
- 34 Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 2.
- 35 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 266.
- 36 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 13; Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 4.
- 37 Anceschi, "Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism."
- 38 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 42–43.
- 39 As argued in Myant and Drahokoupil, *Transition Economies*, 98.
- 40 Bellin, "Democratization and its Discontents," 114.
- 41 See Abashin, "Nation-Construction," for a good discussion of these issues. On the construction of modern Turkmen national traditions, see Christian, "Marat Durdyev and Turkmen Nationalism."
- 42 Abashin, "Nation-Construction," 161.
- 43 Rustemova, "Beyond Democratic Theory," 229.
- 44 Olcott, *Kazakhs*, 274.
- 45 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 71.
- 46 Cummings, *Kazakhstan*, 29–33, summarizes the major economic reforms.
- 47 Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, 176.
- 48 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, Ch. 7, provides much of the information in this section.
- 49 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 299.
- 50 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 303.
- 51 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 316.
- 52 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 305.
- 53 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 306–307.
- 54 Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 337.
- 55 Baabar, "Büü mart!"
- 56 Alan Sanders, afterword to Bawden, *Modern History*, 436.
- 57 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 104.
- 58 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 2–3, and see 91; he would be murdered in 1998, perhaps because he was about to launch a serious attack on corruption.
- 59 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, "Democratic Revolution," 143.
- 60 See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, "1990 Democratic Revolution," 142–145, and "Mongolia, State of," 370–373; much of the above is from Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, Ch. 1, 1–29.

- 61 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/regions/central-and-eastern-europeeurasia>, accessed July 23, 2014.
- 62 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 54.
- 63 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, “Lamas and Monasticism,” 328.
- 64 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, “Chinggis Khan,” 102.
- 65 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 37.
- 66 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 49ff. on privatization.
- 67 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, “Mongolia, State of,” 372.
- 68 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 72, 75, 79–82.
- 69 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 84, citing Lawless, *Wild East*, 54.
- 70 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 108.
- 71 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 114.
- 72 Sneath, “Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization,” 228.
- 73 Sneath, “Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization,” 226–227.
- 74 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 121, 124.
- 75 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 85.
- 76 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 68, 121.
- 77 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 92; but see 99: by 2002 he was arguing for privatization of the social sector and reduction of state budgets.
- 78 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 98–100, 104.
- 79 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 105.
- 80 Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 53, 59.
- 81 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, “Mongolia, State of,” 372.

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## *EPILOGUE: AFTER 2000: THE END OF INNER EURASIA?*

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THIS volume, like its predecessor, has argued that the distinctive geography and ecology of Inner Eurasia has exerted a sustained pressure on the histories of all Inner Eurasian societies. The argument has shown how geography and ecology shaped strategies of mobilization and the related methods of political and economic management. I have suggested that, in the agrarian era, mobilizing resources to build states was for the most part more difficult in Inner Eurasia than in Outer Eurasia, where agriculture was more widespread and supported larger populations and greater wealth. In Inner Eurasia, low productivity, scattered populations, and vast distances meant that, whether they depended on pastoral nomadism or agriculture, the most successful mobilizers were those that could mobilize labor, livestock, and resources effectively over large areas. To do that they had to build disciplined political structures that could hold together extensive military coalitions over large areas. By and large, the polities that mobilized most effectively won out over those that mobilized less successfully. And this, in combination with the relatively flat topography of much of Inner Eurasia, helps explain why exceptionally large empires would eventually dominate much of Inner Eurasia.

This volume began when the first trans-Eurasian empire, that of the Mongols, was breaking up, after the death of Khan Mongke in 1259. That empire had been based on pastoral nomadism, at a time when regions of agriculture were too isolated and unproductive to support large empires inside Inner Eurasia. The volume ended early in the twenty-first century, after the collapse of Inner Eurasia's second trans-Eurasian empire, which began life as the Russian Empire and was based, originally, in expanding agrarian regions of western Inner Eurasia.

Over more than 750 years, however, Inner Eurasian rules of mobilization have changed profoundly. Three large global changes were particularly important. First, the increasing inter-connectedness of the world since the sixteenth century meant that all polities, even in the remotest parts of Inner Eurasia, would eventually be influenced by global commercial, technological,

and intellectual exchanges. Those exchanges created new forms of wealth, and new military and administrative technologies, which changed the rules of mobilization everywhere. Siberian furs could be traded in Europe and China, European cannon and muskets could be used by steppe armies, railways and the telegraph created faster, cheaper communications over the vast territories of Inner Eurasia.

The second fundamental change was the increasing importance of markets as drivers of mobilization and growth. From the sixteenth century, global markets that yielded huge profits gave commerce more importance than ever before in world history. This was the change that Marx acknowledged when he claimed that “capitalism” really arose in the sixteenth century. As the power and wealth generated within global markets increased, states became increasingly dependent on the mobilizational power of markets. And markets, it turned out, had a significant advantage over more traditional forms of direct mobilization, because they encouraged innovation and the efficient use of resources, rather than the cruder methods of traditional tributary systems. Resources mobilized within competitive markets, it turned out, could go further than resources mobilized through direct mobilization, because, as a general rule, competitive markets encouraged more efficient use of resources. In short, markets encouraged intensive as well as extensive forms of growth.

The third fundamental change was the fossil fuels revolution. Suddenly, energy was available for food production, transportation, manufacturing, and even warfare, on scales that would once have seemed unimaginable. And in the modern era, it turned out that Inner Eurasia, which had seemed ecologically impoverished in the agrarian era, was resource rich in the fossil fuels era. As well as huge amounts of land and woodland, it had vast reserves of coal, oil, and gas, and abundant supplies of the metal ores used by modern fossil fuel-powered industries.

Given these changes, has the idea of Inner Eurasia lost its salience in the modern era? The answer is probably “Yes.” As the rules by which power elites mobilize resources have changed, the borders of Inner Eurasia no longer matter as they once did. Methods and strategies of mobilization that had worked well in Inner Eurasia over many millennia no longer work as well today. What better symbol of the change could there be than the emergence of an independent Mongolia as a capitalist democracy, with ties not just to Inner Eurasia but to corporations throughout the world?

And yet... We have also seen that highly centralized strategies of political and economic mobilization have dominated the region’s history, and continue to do so, though to a lesser extent, even today. In the twentieth century, Inner Eurasian societies entered the fossil fuels era under the control of one of the most highly centralized political systems that has ever existed. And even today, most of the Post-Soviet Inner Eurasian Republics have retained strong, centralized political structures that continue to play a significant role in economic management. The inertia of mobilizational strategies that had worked well for hundreds of years has proved extremely powerful, and it will surely affect the region’s history for some time to come, particularly in those regions with abundant reserves of fossil fuels and mineral resources.

But if it is true that the underlying rules of mobilization really have changed, we should not be surprised if traditional mobilizational strategies prove less and less successful in the future. And we should also not assume that the modern history of Inner Eurasia was bound to be shaped by traditional mobilizational strategies. In the early twentieth centuries, as in the 1990s, there were real chances for the emergence of modern, capitalist societies with less centralized political structures. And even the politically centralized societies of Inner Eurasia, today, contain all the preconditions for a flourishing capitalism. The political ghosts of the past do indeed cling to the present in modern Inner Eurasia. Will it take one more “Time of Troubles” before they are finally exorcized? Or have the successor states to the Soviet Union already made the crucial changes needed to survive and even flourish in a modern capitalist world?

Looming beyond these questions is an even larger question faced not just by Inner Eurasia but by the world as a whole. Evidence is accumulating that humans are using the resources of the biosphere on such a vast scale that they are beginning to undermine the biospheric flows of nutrients that drive modern societies, and the climatic foundations on which they have been built. The direct mobilization of resources was always profligate, a lesson learnt by the Soviet Union in the late twentieth century. But modern capitalism, powered by fossil fuels, though more economical in its use of particular resources, has mobilized the resources of the biosphere on vastly greater scales. In the Anthropocene epoch, there is a real danger that capitalism, too, will break down, like the mobilizational machines of the Mongol and Soviet empires, because it will eventually run out of the resources it needs to keep running.





# CHRONOLOGY

**N**OTE: Dates for the Russian Empire before February 1, 1918 are given according to the Julian calendar, which was two weeks behind the Gregorian calendar in operation in Europe. On February 1, 1918, the Soviet government introduced the Gregorian calendar, so that February 1, 1918 was followed immediately by February 15, 1918.

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 1	1206			Temujin becomes Chinggis Khan at a Great <i>Quriltai</i>
	1227			Chinggis Khan dies
	1235			Khan Ogodei begins building Karakorum, capital of empire until 1266
	1237–1241	Batu's western campaigns conquer Pontic steppes		
	1240–1263	Mindaugas (Mendovg, r. c.1240–1263) creates Lithuanian kingdom based on Vilnius		
	1241			Death of Khan Ogodei
	1246	Friar Giovanni Carpini travels from Kiev to Karakorum		<i>Quriltai</i> at Karakorum to elect Khan Guyuk
	1248			Death of Khan Guyuk
	1241–1255	Batu Khan rules in the west; Saray founded		
	1251			Khan Mongke elected: purge of Chagatay and Ogodeid lines
	1252–1263	Alexander Nevskii, prince of Novgorod, Grand Prince of Vladimir		
	1252–1253			Juvaini visits Karakorum

*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
	1253–1254	William of Rubruck visits Saray and Karakorum			
	1258–1267	Batu's brother, Berke (a Muslim), rules Golden Horde			
	Aug 11, 1259			Death of Khan Mongke in China; Ariq-Boke summons <i>quriltai</i>	
CHAPTER 2 1260–1350	April 1260	Mamluk army defeats Mongol army at 'Ain Jalut		Qubilai summons <i>quriltai</i> ; elected khan; Ariq-Boke also elected khan	
	1261	Khan Berke founds Christian bishopric in Saray; Daniil, youngest son of Alexander Nevskii, becomes prince of Moscow (d. 1303)	Qaidu's treaty with Baraq		
	1262	Khan Berke attacks Il-Khanate			
	1263		Alghu, a Chagatayid, becomes ruler of Central Asia with support of Mahmud Yalavach		
	1264			Ariq-Boke submits to Qubilai (dies in 1266)	
	1266		1265/6 Alghu dies	Qubilai moves capital from Karakorum to Beijing (Daidu)	
	1267	Khan Mengu-Temur sells Caffa in Crimea to Genoa and allows Venetians to trade from Tana			
	1271		Qaidu elected Khan of Central Asia at Talas	Yuan dynasty proclaimed	
	early 1270s			Marco Polo visits Karakorum	
	c.1275			Rabban Sauma leaves N. China to travel to Persia, then Rome and Paris	
	1280–1287	Tode-Menghu rules Golden Horde			
	1289			Chinese troops and officials leave Khotan	
	1291–1312	Khan Toqta rules Golden Horde			
	1301		Death of Qaidu		
	1303	Treaty between Chinggisid leaders			
	1304	Prince Mikhail of Tver' made Grand Prince			

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1313–1341	Ozbeq Khan rules Golden Horde: supports spread of Islam		
	1316	Title of Grand Prince transferred to Yurii Daniilovich of Moscow		
	1317	Mikhail of Tver' conquers Moscow, captures Prince Yurii and his Tatar bride, Ozbeq's sister		
	1318	Mikhail and Yuri summoned to Saray; Mikhail executed		
	1318–1326		Kebeg ruler of Transoxiana, based at Qarshi	
	1322	Title of Grand Prince granted to Dmitri, son of Mikhail of Tver'		
	1320s	Metropolitan of Orthodox Church moves to Moscow		
	1326–1334		Tarmashirin ruler of Transoxiana	
	1327	Tver' uprising; Tatar and Muscovite force sack Tver'		
	1330–1333	Ibn Battuta travels in Anatolia, the Golden Horde, and Central Asia		
	1331	Prince Ivan Daniilovich of Muscovy made Grand Prince (d. 1340)		
	1330s	End of Il-Khanate		
	1342–1357	Khan Janibeg rules Golden Horde		
	1340	Francis Balducci Pegolotti's guide to Silk Routes		
	1345		Black Death in Khorezm	
	1346	Black Death in Saray		
	1347	Black Death in Italy, spreads to Europe		
	1352	Black Death enters NW Rus'		
	1353	Black Death kills Prince Simeon of Muscovy		
	1357–1359	Khan Berdibeg rules Golden Horde		
	1360	End of Batuid lineage: beginning of 20-year-long "Great Troubles" in Golden Horde	Timur supports invasion of Transoxiana by the Moghul ruler, Khan Tughlugh-Temur (r. 1347–1363)	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
CHAPTER 3 1350–1500	CHAPTER 4 1350–1500	1362	Algirdas (Olgerd) of Lithuania captures Kiev; Prince Dmitri (Donskoi) rules Moscow until 1389		
		1363	Lithuanian Prince Olgerd, allied to Toqtamish, defeats Tatar armies at battle of Blue Waters		
		1364	Black Death returns		
		1368			Yuan dynasty collapses: Mongol nobles return to Mongolia
		1370		Timur enthroned as ruler of Chagatay <i>ulus</i> at special <i>quriltai</i>	
		1374	Black Death returns		
		1380	Prince Dmitrii defeats Emir Mamaq at battle of Kulikovo: first defeat of Tatar forces by Muscovy; Toqtamish installed as Khan of Golden Horde with Timur's support		
		1381–1386	Timur campaigns in Persia		
		1382	Toqtamish raids Rus', sacks Moscow		
		1385	Lithuanian/Polish polity formed by Union of Kreva		
		1389	Prince Vasilii I of Moscow (r. 1389–1425) marries daughter of Vitautas, accepts Vitautas as his suzerain		
		1390	Timur sacks Saray		
		1392–1397	Timur campaigns in Persia, N. Mesopotamia		
		1394–1395	Timur sacks Saray again, expels Toqtamish, advances close to Moscow		
		1395–1420	Edigu last ruler of Golden Horde, ruling through Chinggisid puppets		
		1396	Black Death returns		
		1398		Timur invades N. India	
		1399	Timur campaigns in Syria, Anatolia; Vitautas of Lithuania defeated by Edigu at Vorskla river		
		1401	Timur besieges Damascus, meets Ibn Khaldūn		
		1402	Timur defeats Ottoman armies in Anatolia		
		1404		Castilian ambassador, Clavijo, visits Timur's capital of Samarkand	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1405		Death of Timur on campaign to conquer China	
	1411–1449		Ulugh-Beg rules Transoxiana	
	1420	Death of Edigu, end of unified Golden Horde		
	1425	Vasilii II rules Moscow (1425–1462); Black Death return;		
	1429		Abul-Khayr elected khan in Tiumen <sup>7</sup>	
	1430	Death of Vitautas, “Duke” of Lithuania		
	1433–1453	Civil war over succession to principality of Moscow		
	1438–1454			Esen rules the Oirat Mongols
	1445	Creation of Kazan <sup>7</sup> khanate by Ulugh-Muhammad		
	1446		Abul-Khayr conquers Syr Darya, makes Sygnak his capital	
	1449	Creation of Crimean khanate by Hajji-Giray; capital at Bakhchesaray		Esen invades China; captures emperor and holds him captive for a year
	1452–1453			Esen invades E. Mongolia and, though not Chinggisid, proclaims himself khan
	1453	Ottoman conquest of Constantinople		
	1454			Esen murdered by Oirat chieftains
	1457–1490		Abul-Khayr defeated by Oirat forces; Khwaja Ahrar influential in Samarkand	
	1458		Giray and Janibek lead many of Abul-Khayr’s people east to Semirechie: traditional origin of Kazakh dynasty	
	1462–1505	Ivan III Grand Prince of Moscow		
	1467		Death of Abul-Khayr; Giray and Janibek rule most of his people	
	1475	Ottoman armies conquer Crimea		
	1478	Khan Mengli-Giray of Crimea accepts Ottoman suzerainty; Ivan III conquers Novgorod		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
	1480	Indecisive battle between Muscovy and Grand Horde at Ugra river; Moscow renounces tributes to Golden Horde			
	1484	Ottoman and Crimean armies capture Akkerman, giving control of west coast of Black Sea			
	1497	First general Muscovite Code of Laws			
	1499	Entry into Siberia: conquest of Ugrian and Vogul lands			
	1480–1511		Buyunduk leader of Kazakhs		
	1482	Crimean armies attack Kiev			
	1500		Muhammad Shibani, leader of “Uzbeks” and Abul-Khayr’s grandson, conquers Bukhara and eventually all Transoxiana; signs accord with Buyunduk		
CHAPTER 5 1500–1600	CHAPTER 6 1500–1600	1502	Remnants of Golden Horde destroyed by Crimean khanate		
		1505–1533	Vasilii III Grand Prince of Moscow		
		1509–1523		Qasim Khan leader of Kazakh khanate	
		1510–1517			Dayan Khan, khan of Khalkha Mongols, defeats Oirat, unites most Mongols
		1515		Yadigarid establishes new dynasty in Khorezm/Khiva	
		1521	War between Muscovy and Crimean khanate: Crimea attacks Moscow		
		1523		Kazakhs split into three hordes or “zhüz”	
		1530s [?]-1582	Oka and Ugra fortified lines reach to Tula		Altan Khan (junior grandson of Dayan Khan) unites Khalkha Mongols
		1538–1580		Khan Haqq-Nazar ruler of all Kazakhs	
		1547–1584	Ivan IV (“The Terrible”) Tsar of Muscovy		
		1550	<i>Strel'tsy</i> (musketeer) units created; new law code issued		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
CHAPTER 5 1500-1600	CHAPTER 6 1500-1600	1552	Muscovy conquers Kazan' khanate		
		1553	British merchants begin trading through Archangel		
		Early 1550s	Reforms of Muscovite local government, service regulations		
		1556	Muscovy conquers Astrakhan (near Saray)		
		1550s			Altan Khan founds Kokhe-Khota, modern Hohehot, in Inner Mongolia, and founds lamasery there
		1557	First formal contacts of Muscovy with Don Cossacks; Kabardin (Circassian) prince, Temriuk Aidar, seeks protection from Muscovy, a fellow Christian power; his sons enter Russian service as Cherkasskis		
		1558	Muscovite forces enter Livonia: Livonian war lasts until 1583	Stroganov family given rights to settle Kama region	
		1560	Death of Ivan's first wife, Anastasia Romanova; Ivan marries daughter of Circassian prince, Maria Temriukovna, creating Muscovite dynastic claims in Caucasus		
		1563		A Kazakh leader, Kuchum, seizes khanate of Sibir	
		1564	Prince Andrei Kurbskii flees to Lithuania; beginning of <i>oprichnina</i>		
		1566	<i>Zemskii Sobor</i>		
		1567-1571	Muscovy briefly controls fort at Tersk in N. Caucasus		
		1569	Union of Lublin unites Poland and Lithuania more closely		
		1570	Novgorod sacked by <i>oprichniki</i>		
		1571	Large Crimean raid on Moscow		Agreement to open border markets between China and Khalkha Mongols
		1572	<i>Oprichnina</i> abolished; Polish monarchy becomes elective		



CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1573			Altan Khan converts to dGe-lugs-pa (Yellow Hat) Tibetan Buddhism
	1575	Simeon Bekbulatovich made “Grand Prince” of Muscovy		
	1578			Altan Khan confers title of Dalai Lama
	1581	Ban on peasants leaving landlords for 1 year; Ivan kills his son and heir, Ivan	Stroganovs attack Sibir from a base near Tiumen’, with 500 Cossacks led by Ermak	
	1582	Truce with Lithuania surrenders Muscovite gains in Livonia		Death of Altan Khan; widespread conversion to Yellow Hat Buddhism
	1583		Abdullah II (1583–1598) reunifies Uzbek khanate; Ermak defeats Kuchum at his capital near modern Tobolsk	
	1584	Ivan IV dies; his second son, Fedor, becomes Tsar, but Fedor’s brother-in-law, Boris Godunov, is effective ruler		
	1585		Ermak is killed	Abatai Khan founds lamasery of Erdeni Zuu, in Karakorum
	1586–1598		Taulkel Khan, last ruler of all Kazakhs	
	1589	Boris Godunov creates the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church		
	1590	War resumes with Sweden in Livonia		
	1591	Fedor’s brother, Dmitrii, dies; large Crimean raid		
	1597	Decree allowing forcible return of all peasants who had moved in last 5 years		
	1598	Death of Fedor ends Rurikid lineage in Muscovy; Godunov crowned Tsar; Oka fortified line abandoned after building of Belgorod line		
	1598–1612	Muscovy’s “Time of Troubles”	Death of Khan Abdullah II (1583–1598); end of Shibanid dynasty in Transoxiana	
	1599		Astarkhanids or Janids establish dynasty in Bukhara	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
CHAPTER 7 1600–1750	CHAPTER 8 1600–1750	1601–1602	Crop failures and famine in Muscovy	Fort of Tobolsk founded	
		1604	Army of pretender, Otrepev, invades from SW, with Polish support	Fort of Tomsk founded	Ligdan Khan (r. 1604–1634) of Chahar Mongols, last major Chinggisid khan
		1605	Godunov dies; Otrepev becomes Tsar		
		1606	Otrepev murdered; Vasilii Shuiskii becomes Tsar		
		1607		Turukhansk founded on the Yenisei river	
		1608			Raiding party of Oirat (Kalmyk) enters Nogai steppe
		1610	Shuiskii forced to abdicate		
		1611	“National” army emerges		
		1612	National army captures Moscow		
		1613	<i>Zemskii Sobor</i> elects Mikhail Romanov Tsar: start of Romanov dynasty		
		1617	Muscovy surrenders to Sweden last strip of land on Gulf of Finland		
		1618	Muscovy surrenders control of Smolensk and Chernigov to Poland and concedes on Polish claims to Muscovite throne		
		1619	Mikhail Romanov’s father, Filaret, returns from Polish captivity: de facto ruler? Government launches census	Yadigard dynasty established in Khorezm (Khiva)	Ivan Petlin first Muscovite official to visit China
		1620s			Kalmyk raids in S. Siberia, Bashkiria, lower Volga
		1631		Russians reach Lake Baikal	
		1632	Filaret forms foreign “New Formation” military units in attempt to retake Smolensk; arms manufactory founded at Tula under Dutch merchant, Andries Winius		Yakutsk founded on Lena river
		1630	Iron production begins in Urals		Kalmyk migration to Nogai steppe, north of Caspian Sea, under Qo Orlog

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
CHAPTER 7 1600–1750	CHAPTER 8 1600–1750	1635–1646	Building of Belgorod line of forts		Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji (r. 1635–1653) builds Oirat Empire; Tibetan Buddhism spreads among Oirat
		1639			While still a child, Zanabazar, son of the Tushetu khan, identified as a living Buddha (or Khutugtu), first Jebtsundamba Khutugtu
		1640			Last attempt at pan-Mongolian unity at <i>quriltai</i> in Tarbagatai, Zungharia
		1641			Cossacks reach Sea of Okhotsk
		1643			Erdeni leads first major Oirat invasion of Kazakh lands in Semirechie
		1645	Death of Mikhail Romanov; succession of Alexei Mikhailovich		
		1647			Moscow treaty with Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji, founder of Oirat Empire
		1648–1649	Religious reforms		
		1648	Riots in Moscow; Bogdan Khmel'nitskii revolt in Ukraine		
		1649	<i>Ulozhenie</i> passed by <i>Zemskii Sobor</i> , permanently ties serfs to the land		
		1652	Nikon appointed Patriarch: introduces more religious reforms		
		1654	Khmel'nitskii accepts Muscovite protection in treaty of Pereiaslav		
		1655			First Kalmyk treaty ( <i>shert</i> ) with Muscovy
		1656	Riots in Moscow caused by debasement of coinage		
		1652			Qing troops attack Khabarov's camp at Albazin on the Amur river
		1653			Muscovite mission to China
		1654–1667	13 years' war with Poland		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1658			Muscovite mission to China
	1661			Irkutsk founded
	1662	More riots in Moscow caused by debasement of coinage		
	1666	Nikon deposed as Patriarch		
	1667	13 years' war with Poland ends with armistice of Andrusovo; Russia controls much of left-bank (east) Ukraine		
	1668			Muscovite mission to China led by Bukharan trader
	1669			Kalmyk <i>tayishi</i> , Ayuka (r. 1670–1724), signs new treaty with Muscovy
	1670–1671	Stenka Razin revolt		
	1675			Muscovite mission to China led by Milesco
	1676	Death of Alexei Mikhailovich, succession of Fedor, a minor, with sister, Sophia, as regent		
	1676–1681	First major Muscovite war with Ottoman Empire		
	1678			Khung-Taiji's second son, Galdan (b. 1644, r. 1678–1697), becomes Oirat leader; conquers Tarim basin and Zungharia; sends trading mission to China
	1679	Tax assessment shifted from land to households		
	1680	First Muscovite state budget	Sultan Tawke of the Kazakh (r. 1680–1715); creator of Law Code	Zanabazar builds lamasery at future site of Khuriye (Ulaanbaatar)
	1682	Fedor dies; Sophia regent for Fedor's brother Ivan and half-brother Peter; <i>mestnichestvo</i> system abolished; <i>strel'tsy</i> uprising		
	1685			Muscovite fort of Albazin surrenders to Qing troops

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1687, 1689	Two attempted invasions of Crimea under Prince Golitsyn		Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) between Muscovy and China
	1688			Oirats under Galdan invade E. Mongolia
	1689	Sophia overthrown		Defection of Oirats under Tsewang Rabtan
	1691			Khalkha Mongols accept Qing suzerainty at Dolonnor
	1696	Ivan dies; Peter becomes sole ruler; conquers Azov until 1711		Qing forces defeat Oirat army
	1697			Galdan dies; new Oirat leader, Tsewang Rabtan (r. 1697–1727); Russian expedition enters Kamchatka
	1697–1698	Peter becomes first Tsar to visit Europe		
	1698	Peter returns to crush <i>strel'tsy</i> revolt		Oirat attacks on Kazakhs
	1700	Russian armies defeated by Sweden at battle of Narva; death of Patriarch Adrian, Peter allows Patriarchate to lapse		
	1703	Russian army secures territory on Gulf of Finland		
	1704			Silver smelter built at Nerchinsk
	1705		Bashkir uprising prompts building of new fortified lines in Urals	
	1706			Proposals to Christianize Siberia
	1707–1708	Bulavin uprising		
	1709	Russian armies defeat Swedish forces at battle of Poltava; gain control of most of Baltic shore	Bukhara loses control of Ferghana valley	
	1710		Shahrukh Biy establishes Ming dynasty and Kokand khanate	
	1711	St. Petersburg becomes new capital; Russian forces defeated by Ottomans on Pruth river		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1716			Russian expedition to Lake Yamysh under Buchholtz; Russia starts building new line of forts in W. Kazakh steppes
	1717	<i>Prikazy</i> replaced with “Colleges,” using Swedish models	Shir Ghazi (1715–1728) of Khiva defeats Russian military expedition led by Bekovich Cherkasskii	
	1718	Peter’s son, Alexei, dies under judicial torture; Tsaritsyn line of forts between Volga and Don cuts migration routes		
	1720			Qing armies expel Oirat from Tibet
	1721	Treaty of Nystadt: Russian Empire now dominant in NE Europe; Russian census; Donbass coal fields discovered		
	1722	Table of Ranks; unsuccessful invasion of Persia through E. Caucasus		Bering expedition arrives in Okhotsk
	1723			Oirat attacks on Kazakhs; Kazakh defeated near Talas: “The Great Calamity”
	1724	Poll tax introduced; Russian Academy of Science founded		
	1725	Peter dies, succeeded by his wife, Catherine (1725–1727)		
	1728			Treaty of Kiakhta between Russia and China
	1731		Khan Abulkhair of Kazakh “Lesser Horde” accepts Russian suzerainty	Galdan Tsereng (r. 1727–1745) becomes Oirat leader
	1730s		Khans of Kazakh “Middle Horde” accept Russian suzerainty	
	1734		Kirilov expedition founds Orenburg (called Orsk after 1743); Bashkir wars (1734–1738 and 1740); start of Orenburg line of forts	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1739		Russian government allows Kazakhs formally to trade Russian goods and precious metals to China and Central Asia	
	1740		Persian invasion of Transoxiana	
	1741–1762	Mozdok line of fortifications in N. Caucasus, along Terek river		
CHAPTER 11 1750–1900	1753		Mangit dynasty in Bukhara; rules effectively from 1785, under Shah Murad	
	1754	First Russian bank created		
	1755	Foundation of University of Moscow		Qing army invades Zungharia with support of Amursana, who then turns on Qing
	1756			Second and final Qing invasion of Zungharia; end of Zunghar Empire; new Chinese province of Xinjiang; province of E. Siberia created, with capital at Irkutsk
	1757–1760	Russian armies in Europe defeat Frederick the Great, capture Berlin		
	1762, Jan	Peter III ruler of Russia, allies with Prussia, murdered 6 months later		
	1762–1796	Reign of Catherine the Great		
	1763		Building of Siberian “ <i>trakt</i> ” road begins	
	1764	Ukrainian Hetmanate abolished; Stanislaw August Poniatowski, a former lover of Catherine, elected Polish king; province of Novorossiia created		
	1768–1774	War with Ottoman Empire ends with treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca; Russia secures much of right-bank (west) Ukraine and suzerainty over Crimea		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1771	Russia claims suzerainty over Kabarda	Majority of Kalmyk migrate to Zungharia	
	1772	Russian forces defeat Polish “Confederation of Bar”; Russia annexes Belarus in first partition of Poland		
	1775	Pugachev uprising		
	1776	First full-scale James Watt steam engine built; start of Anthropocene epoch?		
	1778			Khuriye becomes settled town, where modern Ulaanbaatar is now
	1781	Ukraine fully incorporated within Russian Empire		
	1783	Crimea and S. Ukraine incorporated within Russian Empire; end of Crimean khanate; King of Georgia accepts Russian suzerainty; works begin on Georgian military highway between Tbilisi and Vladikavkaz		
	1785	“Noble Charter” grants nobles property and freedom from compulsory service		
	1793	Second partition of Poland		
	1794	Kosciuszko uprising in Poland		
	1795	Russian armies under Suvorov crush Polish uprising; third partition of Poland		
	1798		Revived Kokand khanate under Ming begins to expand north, building forts	
	1799			Russian–American company founded
	1801	Paul I annexes Georgia; Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) becomes Tsar after his father is murdered		
	1804		Khiva, Qongrat dynasty founded by Eлтүзер Inaq	
	1805	Russian and Austrian forces defeated at Austerlitz		



Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 9 1750–1850	1807	Treaty of Tilsit with Napoleon		
	1808–1818		Expansion of Kokand persuades several Kazakh groups to accept Russian suzerainty	
	1810	Russia abandons Napoleon’s blockade of Britain; Speranskii reforms change “Colleges” into “Ministries”		
	1811			Fort “Rossia” (Fort Ross) founded north of San Francisco
	1812	Napoleon’s armies invade Russia in June; leave December		
	1812–1813	Treaties with Ottoman and Persian empires concede Russian suzerainty over much of Caucasus		
	1814	Russian and allied armies enter Paris		
	1815	Congress of Vienna: Alexander creates new Kingdom of Poland		
	1816–1827	General Yermolov, proconsul of Caucasus		
	1822–1842		Under Madali Khan (1822–1842), Kokand reaches its largest extent, including control over Kashgar	
	1822		Siberian Reforms of Mikhail Speranskii; Russia abolishes position of Khan of Middle Horde and (in 1824) Khan of Lesser Horde; direct Russian administration of much of Kazakh steppe	
	1825	Death of Alexander, accession of Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855); Decembrist revolt		
	1830	Polish uprising crushed by Russian forces		
	1830s		Emir Nasrallah (r. 1827–1860) of Bukhara tries to build centralized army	
	1834	Shamil leader of Muslim anti-Russian forces in Caucasus until 1859		
	1837–1846		Kenisary uprising ends in Russian defeat of Great Horde	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1839		Khiva defeats Russian military expedition	
	1840s	Slavophile Westernizer debates		
	1844–1853	Mikhail Vorontsov Viceroy in Caucasus		
	1847–1854		Russia builds two new lines of forts in Kazakh steppes, south from Semipalatinsk and along the Syr Darya; 1853, capture of much of Syr Darya; 1854, fort of Vernoe (Almaty)	
	1849	Hungarian uprising crushed by Russian forces		Russian flag hoisted at Nikolaevsk at the mouth of the Amur river
	1853–1856	Crimean War		1853, Sakhalin seized by Russian forces; 1854, governor Muravev conquers Amur region and builds fort at Khabarovsk
	1855	Nicholas I dies; accession of Alexander II (r. 1855–1881)		
	1856	Treaty of Paris; Alexander II invites nobles to offer reform proposals		
	1858		Russian diplomatic/commercial mission to Khiva under Colonel N. P. Ignatev	
	1860			Vladivostok founded; Russian consulate opens in Khuriye
	1861	Abolition of serfdom: beginning of “Great Reforms”		
	1862	First populist revolutionary movements		
	1863	Polish uprising		
	1864	Judicial reform, creation of <i>zemstva</i> ; Russian conquest of Circassia	In two attacks, from Vernoe and Syr Darya, Russian forces under Cherniaev take Tashkent	Qing lose control of much of Xinjiang after uprisings
	1865			A Kokandi soldier, Ya’qub Beg, rules Tarim basin until 1877; gains recognition from Russians and British

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1866		Bukhara defeated; becomes Russian protectorate	
	1867		Turkestan Governor-Generalship created, under K. P. von Kaufman (1818–1882)	Russia sells Russian Alaska to US government for \$7.2 million
	1870	Donbass ironworks founded by John Hughes		8th Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1870–1924)
	1873	Nobel family buys oil refinery near Baku	Khiva becomes Russian protectorate	
	1874	Reform of army under Dmitrii Miliutin		
	1875–1876		Conquest of Kokandi khanate	
	1877	Russo-Turkish war		
	1878	Congress of Berlin		Qing reconquer Xinjiang
	1879		Turkmen soldiers defeat Russian forces at Geok-Tepe near modern Ashkhabad	
	1880		Military railway line from Caspian Sea to Ashkhabad	
	1881	Alexander II assassinated by “People’s Will”; accession of Alexander III (r. 1881–1894)	General Skobelev conquers Geok-Tepe and massacres surviving soldiers	
	1883	Oil pipeline built from Batu to Black Sea	Establishment of Ismail Bey Gasprinski’s paper, <i>Terjiman</i> (“The Translator”), arguing for modernized Muslim education	
	1884			Qing formally create new province of Xinjiang with Urumqi as capital
	1885	Poll tax abolished		
	1887	Lenin’s brother, Sasha, executed as member of plot to assassinate Tsar	Central Asia/Afghanistan border negotiated with Britain	
	1888		Siberia’s first university founded in Tomsk	
	1889	Resettlement act encourages settlement in Kazakh steppes		
	1891	Work begins on Trans-Siberian railroad; massive famines		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 10 1850–1914	1894	Alexander III dies; accession of Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917, d. 1918)		
	1895	Tsar Nicholas dismisses request of moderate liberals for national <i>zemstvo</i> as “senseless dreams”		
	1896	Resettlement Administration established to encourage settlement in Kazakh steppes		1896–1903, China allows Russia to build “Chinese-Eastern Railway” through Manchuria to Vladivostok and south to Port Arthur
	1897	Russian ruble on gold standard		
	1900	Global economic slump: Russian Marxists form underground paper, “The Spark”; “Revolutionary Ukrainian Party” formed	Caspian to Ashkhabad railway reaches Tashkent via Samarkand	Boxer rebellion, Russian troops enter Manchuria to protect Chinese-Eastern Railway
	1901–1903	Populist “Social Revolutionary” party forms under Victor Chernov		
	1901–1903	Zubatov unions		
	1902	Rural insurrections begin; foundation of underground liberal paper, “Liberation”; government commission recommends accelerated migration to Kazakh steppes		
	1903	First Congress of Russian Social Democratic Party splits into “Menshevik” and “Bolshevik” wings		
	1904	“Union of Liberation” formed in St. Petersburg		Jan 1904, Japanese attack on Port Arthur begins Russo-Japanese war

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1905	Jan 9: “Bloody Sunday” massacre; May, first Soviet forms in Ivanovo; May, Japanese sink Russian fleet in straits of Tsushima; Sept 5, treaty of Portsmouth ends Russo-Japanese war; Sept 9, general strike begins; Oct 14, St. Petersburg Soviet forms; Oct 17, “October Manifesto” promises reforms; Oct, Kadet and Octobrist liberal parties form; widespread riots and mutinies; Dec 3, St. Petersburg Soviet arrested, uprising in Moscow suppressed	Strikes and mutinies along Trans-Siberian railroad	Sept 5, treaty of Portsmouth ends Russo-Japanese war
	1906	April, “Fundamental Laws” issued; Duma meets April 27; July 9, first Duma dismissed; P. A. Stolypin appointed Prime Minister; Nov, Stolypin passes decrees reforming peasant commune	Opening of Orenburg–Tashkent railroad; large-scale migrations of peasants to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia begin	Chinese reforms in Mongolia threaten increased control and Chinese migration and provoke opposition
	1907	Second Duma meets; dismissed June 3; Stolypin illegally changes electoral law by decree; Nov, third Duma meets, elected under new electoral laws		
	1911	Stolypin assassinated		Qing dynasty collapses, Mongolia declares independence, Jebtsundamba Khutugtu installed as ruler; Yang Zengxin assumes power in Urumqi, Xinjiang
	1912	April, Lena gold fields massacre prompts industrial strikes		Mongolia forces take Khobdo in W. Mongolia
	1914	July, World War I begins; St. Petersburg renamed Petrograd; Aug, Russian defeats at Tannenberg and Masurian lakes		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 12 1914–1921	1915	German army enters W. Poland and Lithuania; May, Tsar allows War Industries Committee and Committee of Zemstvo and town governments to contribute to management of war; Fall, Tsar appoints self commander-in-chief; Duma leaders form “Progressive Bloc”		Russia accepts Chinese suzerainty over Mongolia
	1916	By July, after Brusilov defense fails, Russian borders pushed back to those of late 17th century	June, attempts to mobilize in Central Asia provoke uprising	
	1917, Feb	Feb 23, riots in capital; Feb 25, Tsar orders garrison troops to disperse rioters; Feb 27, most mutiny, Tsar prorogues Duma, but its members stay in session illegally; Petrograd Soviet created		
	1917, Mar	Mar 1, Soviet issues “Order No. 1”; Mar 2, Nicholas II abdicates in favor of brother, after consulting Army High Command; Mar 3, brother hands power to Provisional Committee of Duma; Mar 6, Provisional Committee and Soviet agree to form new Provisional Government, under G. E. L’vov, adopting radical liberal programs of democratic reform; Kiev, nationalist government formed	Provisional Committee and Soviet in Tashkent; Soviets in most Siberian towns and cities	Committee of Safety formed in Yakutsk, overthrown in July
	1917, Apr	Liberal ministers resign over war policy; Lenin returns, April 3, issues “April theses”; land seizures begin	Jadidists expelled from Bukhara	
	1917, May	All-Muslim Russian Congress meets in Moscow	All-Siberian Regional Duma, Tomsk	

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter		Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 12 1914–1921		1917, July	July 3–7, Bolsheviks attempt unsuccessful insurrection, Lenin flees to Finland, Trotsky joins Bolsheviks; July 8, L'vov resigns as PM, replaced by Kerensky, who appoints L. G. Kornilov commander-in-chief on July 16	“Alash Orda” formed in Kazakhstan	
		1917, Aug	Aug 25–Sept 1, Kornilov tries unsuccessfully to bring troops to Petrograd to restore order		
		1917, Sep	Sept 9, Bolsheviks win majorities in Petrograd and then Moscow Soviets; Sept 13, Lenin demands preparations for new uprising		
		1917, Oct	Oct 23, Kerensky closes Bolshevik paper; Military Revolutionary Committee (led by Trotsky) demands garrison troops defend the city; Oct 25, second All-Russian Congress of Soviets meets; Oct 26, Winter Palace captured, Kerensky flees; second Congress of Soviets accepts proposal for new “Soviet of People’s Commissars” dominated by Bolsheviks and Left SRs: decrees on peace and land; similar coups in other major cities		
		1917, Nov/Dec	Anti-Bolshevik forces gather in Don Cossack territory; elections for Constituent Assembly; Ukraine and Finland declare independence	Soviet takes power in Tashkent; Dec, Autonomous Turkestan proclaimed in Kokand	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1918, Jan to June	Jan, Constituent Assembly dispersed by Bolsheviks; Mar, Left SRs leave, Party renamed Communist Party; treaty of Brest-Litovsk; government moves to Moscow; May, Czech army of prisoners turns on Bolsheviks; Komuch (Committee of Constituent Assembly) government formed in Samara; government nationalizes all factories; accepts need for traditional disciplined army and forcible mobilization of resources	Jan, Alash Orda government formed in Kazakhstan as well as regional Cossack governments; Feb, Tashkent Soviet defeats Kokand government; Soviet forces expelled from Bukhara; beginnings of Basmachi movement; May, Czech Legion seizes trans-Siberian railroad; regional governments form in Siberia; Nov 18, Kolchak seizes power over the "Directorate" in Omsk	Japanese forces land in Vladivostok
	1918, July to Dec	July, royal family executed in Yekaterinburg; Sept, Red Army turns back Czech forces at Kazan'		
	1919	White armies advance from Siberia (Kolchak), south (Denikin), and Baltic (Yudenich), but turned back; by end of 1919, major White armies defeated; Orgburo and Secretariat of the Central Committee (CC) created	June, White advances in Siberia checked at Ufa; Nov, Kolchak retreats east; late 1919 to early 1920, Red armies take much of Kazakhstan and Transoxiana	Chinese troops enter Khuriye; revolutionary groups begin to form in Khuriye
	1920	Apr to Oct, Russo-Polish war; Nov 20, Gen. Wrangel defeated in Crimea	Alash Orda recognizes Bolshevik government	Khutugtu forced to accept Chinese suzerainty; Feb, Kolchak shot in Irkutsk; June, Mongolian People's Party formed in Khuriye; Party members contact Comintern in Irkutsk; Oct, Ungern-Sternberg's army enters Mongolia, expels Chinese forces



Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia	
CHAPTER 13 1921–1930	CHAPTER 15 1900–1950	1920		Debts of indigenous populations in Siberia cancelled	
		1921	Widespread famines; Jan, Feb, uprisings in towns and rural areas; March, tenth Party Congress, tax in kind, resolution on party unity; Kronstadt Uprising crushed Mar 17; Gosplan created; Cheka replaced by GPU		Feb, Ungern-Sternberg's forces enter Khuriye, expel Chinese troops; Khutugtu enthroned once more as ruler; Mar, first Congress of Mongolian People's Party in Kiakhta forms Provisional Government; July, Soviet and Mongolian troops retake Khuriye; July 9, new national government formed; July 11 (Mongolian National Day), Khutugtu enthroned as ruler for the third time
		1922	May, Lenin's first stroke; Stalin becomes General Secretary; Dec, USSR created, includes Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian republics	Enver Pasha briefly revives Basmachi movement	Red Army retakes Vladivostok; serfdom abolished in Mongolia
		1923	"Scissors Crisis"		
		1924	Jan, Lenin dies; St. Petersburg renamed Leningrad; Soviet constitution adopted, Stalin's lectures on Leninism; League of Atheists established	Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) created	May, Khutugtu dies: Mongolia declared "Mongolian People's Republic"; new parliamentary body created ( <i>khural</i> ), Khuriye renamed Ulaanbaatar; Soviet troops leave Mongolia
		1925	Trotsky removed as Commissar of War	"Institute of Peoples of the North" established in Leningrad	
		1926–1927		Anti-veil campaigns in Central Asia	
		1927	May, diplomatic crisis with Britain; first Five-Year Plan adopted		
		1928	Stalin visits W. Siberia; Trotsky exiled to Almaty; "Shakhty" affair; first Five-Year Plan made more ambitious; defeat of Bukharin and "Right Opposition"; <i>vydvizhentsy</i> start being drafted into educational institutions		Sept, Comintern delegation begins imposing Soviet policies on Mongolian government; Yang Zengxin assassinated in Urumqi, replaced by Jin Shuren

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1928–1932	First Five-Year Plan		
	1929	Nov 29, article on “The Great Turn”, start of collectivization; Dec 21, Stalin’s 50th birthday; dekulakization	Tajik SSR created	Party purge in Mongolia, beginning of expropriation of noble and lamasery lands and livestock
	1930	Jan, Feb, anti-collectivization protests; Mar 2, “Dizzy with Success” article; GULAG created; unemployment pay abolished	Collectivization and dekulakization in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Siberia	
	1930			Five-Year Plan launched in Mongolia; attacks on religious institutions
	1931	Stalin criticizes “egalitarianism”		Civil wars begin in Xinjiang as Jin Shuren tries to seize Hami (Qumul)
	1932	Socialist Realism established; Union of Soviet Writers; “Riutin plot”		Tanks used to crush uprisings in Mongolia; June, Party retreats from collectivization; “New Turn Policy”
	1932–1937	Second Five-Year Plan		
	1932–1933	Collectivization famines		
	1933			“Eastern Turkestan Republic” founded in NE Xinjiang; Jin Shuren flees; new ruler, Sheng Shicai (r. 1933–1944)
	1934	GPU and GULAG absorbed within expanded NKVD (Commissariat of Internal Affairs); 17th Party Congress; Dec, murder of Kirov; Kirov decrees		Soviet police forces sent to Xinjiang to support Sheng Shicai
	1935	Model Collective Farm Code		Soviet troops return to Mongolia
	1936		Kyrgyz (Kazakh) SSR created	Feb, Stalin demands appointment of Choibalsan (r. 1936–1951) as new Mongolian leader; show trials and purges of religious leaders
	1936–1939	Spanish Civil War		

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 14 1930–1950	1936–1938	Show trials and purges	Purges in Central Asia	
	1938			Sheng Shicai travels from Urumqi to Moscow and joins Soviet Communist Party
	1939	Russo-Finnish war; Aug, Nazi–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact; Sept 1, Germany invades Poland, France and Britain declare war; Soviet army enters Baltic republics, E. Poland, W. Ukraine	Ferghana canal completed	Jun to Aug, Soviet army defeats Japanese forces at Khalkhyn Gol in Mongolia
	1940	Trotsky murdered in Mexico	Cyrillic script introduced in Central Asia	
	1941	May, Stalin becomes head of Sovnarkom; June 22, German armies attack USSR; June 24, committee to evacuate industries; July 3, Stalin broadcasts to Soviet people; Dec, first Soviet victories near Moscow	Industries evacuated to Siberia and Central Asia; arrival of wartime refugees	Sheng Shicai severs ties with USSR after Nazi invasion
	1942	Sept to Nov, battle of Stalingrad		
	1943	New Patriarch elected; concordat with Orthodox Church; Lend-Lease supplies start arriving		
	1944			Guomintang forces remove Sheng Shicai from office
	1945	May 2, fall of Berlin; May 9, German surrender		Soviet Union surrenders Xinjiang to Guomintang
	1945–1949	Soviet control of E. Europe established		
	1949		Aug 1949, first Soviet atomic bomb tested in Kazakhstan	Troops of Chinese PLA enter and take control of Xinjiang; Oct 1, Mao proclaims People’s Republic of China (PRC); Xinjiang becomes a province of PRC; joint Soviet–Mongolian mining enterprises established; Mongolian rail line completed to Ulan-Ude

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1952			Death of Choibalsan, leader of Mongolia, replaced by Jaagiin Tsendenbal (r. 1952–1984)
	1953	Mar 5, Stalin dies; Malenkov chooses position as head of Sovnarkom; Mar 27, amnesty for non-political prisoners in camps; Apr 1, prices cut on many consumer goods; uprisings in Vorkuta, E. Berlin; June 28, Beria arrested; July, armistice in Korean War; Aug, procurement prices raised; Sept, Khrushchev becomes General Secretary of the CC; Dec, Beria executed	Aug, first Soviet H-bomb detonated in Kazakhstan	Mongolia launches new round of collectivization
	1953	Amnesties release millions from camps throughout USSR		
	1954	Secret police replaced by KGB (Committee of State Security) under Party CC	Virgin Lands program launched	Building of Bratsk hydroelectric power system begins
	1955	Malenkov resigns	Baikonur rocket site established in Kazakhstan	Xinjiang renamed Uighur Autonomous Region
	1956	Feb, Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" to the 20th Party Congress		
	1957	Presidium sacks Khrushchev; Khrushchev appeals to CC, is reinstated; GULAG placed under Ministry of Justice; program to build new apartments; creation of Sovnarkhozy (Regional Economic Councils)	Oct, launch of Sputnik from Baikonur; Akademgorodok founded near Novosibirsk	
	1958–1961			Chinese "Great Leap Forward"
	1959		First unmanned mission to moon, Luna 2, launched from Baikonur; Sharof Rashidov becomes leader of Uzbekistan (r. 1959–1983)	

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia		
CHAPTER 16 1950–1991	CHAPTER 17 1950–1991	1960s		New oil and gas fields found in W. Siberia and Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Central Asia; Dinmukhamed Kunaev becomes ruler of Kazakhstan (r. 1960–1986)	New Mongolian national symbol adds wheatsheaves to images of livestock	
		1961		Apr 12, Yuri Gagarin takes off from Baikonur for first space flight	Mongolia enters UN	
		1962	Publication of Solzhenitsyn's <i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i> ; Oct, Cuban missile crisis			Mongolian conference on Chinggis Khan; Xinjiang border with Soviet Central Asia closed
		1963	Kosygin economic reforms put some enterprises on "profit" basis			
		1964	Oct 13, Khrushchev sacked by Presidium, replaced by Leonid Brezhnev			Chinese nuclear tests in Lop Nor, Xinjiang
		1965	Ministry of Gas Production (later Gazprom) established			1965–1968, Cultural Revolution in China
		1967	Yuri Andropov becomes head of KGB; dismissal of A. M. Nekrich for critical account of Great Patriotic War			First TVs in Mongolia
		1968	Czech "Prague Spring" reforms suppressed by Warsaw Pact troops			
		1969				Soviet/Chinese tensions high, Soviet troops re-enter Mongolia
		1970s				Building of industrial city of Darhan and Erdenet mines in Mongolia, with Soviet aid
		1973	Oil prices begin to rise			
		1976				Death of Mao Zedong
		1978				Deng Xiaoping becomes Chinese leader
		1979			Soviet troops enter Afghanistan	
		1981	Oil prices begin to fall			
		1982	Nov, Brezhnev dies, succeeded by Yuri Andropov			

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1984	Feb, Andropov dies, replaced by Konstantin Chernenko		Dismissal of Tsedenbal as leader of Mongolia, replaced by Jambyn Batmonkh (r. 1984–1990)
	1985	Mar 10, Chernenko dies, replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev; anti-alcohol campaign; Nov, first summit with USA		Beginnings of <i>perestroika</i> and <i>glasnost</i> in Mongolia
	1986	Apr, Chernobyl disaster; 27th Party Congress, beginning of economic reforms, beginnings of <i>glasnost</i>	Dec, Gorbachev replaces Kunaev as leader of Kazakhstan with a Russian, Gennadi Kolbin, provoking riots in the capital, Almaty	
	1987	Jan, enterprises allowed to trade abroad; June, new enterprise law		Karakoram highway between Xinjiang and Pakistan opened
	1988	May, cooperatives permitted; collective farmers allowed to take out long leases on land; June, Gorbachev announces plans for democratization and new “Congress of People’s Deputies”; informal organizations appear, including “Memorial”; Dec, Gorbachev renounces Brezhnev doctrine at UN; war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh		Criticisms of Soviet era in Mongolian press, proposals for multi-party elections
	1989	May, first meeting of Congress of People’s Deputies, Ukrainian <i>Verkhovna Rada</i> meets; emergence of informals, including <i>Rukh</i> , in Ukraine; June, non-communist government elected in Poland; Nov and Dec, most E. European governments collapse, USSR does not react; Baltic republics declare “sovereignty”; Belarusian National Front formed	Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan; ethnic riots in Uzbekistan; Karimov becomes Uzbek First Secretary; Nazarbaev First Secretary of Kazakhstan	Dec, demonstrations in Ulaanbaatar’s Sukhebaator square

CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1990	Jan, Polish economic reforms begin; Mar, removal of article 6 of 1977 Soviet constitution giving Party monopoly power; May, Boris Yeltsin elected head of Russian Supreme Soviet; June, Yeltsin resigns from Communist Party; Latvia declares independence, soon followed by other republics; Sept, 500-Day Plan for radical economic reform; Oct, massive pro-independence rallies in Kiev's Maidan Square	Ethnic riots in Osh, Kyrgyzstan; Niazov, Karimov, and Nazarbaev appointed to Soviet Politburo; Niazov elected President of Turkmenistan; Karimov elected President of Uzbekistan; Nazarbaev elected President of Kazakhstan	Mongolia, Baabar's essay, "Don't Forget"; first independent Mongolian paper since 1921; Mar, agreement to hold elections, Batmonkh replaced as leader by Ochirbat; railway between Urumqi and Almaty; revival of Buddhism; July, Mongolian People's Party wins first multi-party elections; Ochirbat becomes first President of independent Mongolia
	1991	June, Yeltsin elected President of Russian Federation, first elected leader in Russian history; Gorbachev tries to negotiate new "Union Treaty"; Aug, attempted "putsch" fails; Communist Party banned; Nov, Russian Supreme Soviet gives Yeltsin power to rule by decree; Dec 8, leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus create new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Leonid Kravchuk elected President of Ukraine; Dec 25, Gorbachev resigns as President of USSR: flag of Russian Federation raised over Kremlin; in Belarus, conflicts between President Shushkevich and PM, Kebich	Oct, Akaev elected President of Kyrgyzstan	Privatization of <i>negdels</i> and state assets begins

Chapter		Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
CHAPTER 18 1991–2000	CHAPTER 19 1991–2000	1992	Jan 2, market reforms begin in Russia managed by Egor Gaidar; production falls in all former Soviet republics; June, 1992, privatization plan using vouchers launched under Anatolii Chubais; opponents of reform within Russian Supreme Soviet block further reform; Federation treaty negotiated with regions; Dec, privatization auctions begin in Russia, by mid-1994, 16,000 large enterprises privatized; Gaidar sacked as PM, replaced by Viktor Chernomyrdin; in Ukraine, Kravchuk negotiates lease of Sevastopol to Russia, continued supply of Russian oil and gas, and surrender of Ukrainian nuclear weapons; Belarus introduces economic reforms	Dec, new Uzbek constitution enhances presidential powers; new Kazakh constitution enhances presidential powers; 1992–1997, civil war in Tajikistan; Nov, Rahmon becomes President of Tajikistan	New democratic Mongolian constitution; “Lenin” Avenue becomes “Chinggis Khan” Avenue; price liberalization
		1993	May, Kyrgyzstan establishes independent currency; July, Russian Federal Bank declares Soviet rubles invalid; collective farms privatized, many as “corporate farms”; Sept, Yeltsin dissolves Supreme Soviet, whose members declare him replaced as President by Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi; Yeltsin bombards Supreme Soviet building and arrests its leaders; new constitution gives President enhanced powers; Dec, elections, communists and “Liberal Democrats” do well; market reforms largely abandoned in Belarus	Oct, Nazarbaev closes Kazakh Supreme Soviet, calls elections; Heidar Aliev becomes President of Azerbaijan	1993–1995, Taklamakan Desert Highway built



CHRONOLOGY

Chapter	Date	Western Inner Eurasia	Central Inner Eurasia	Eastern Inner Eurasia
	1994	50% of Russian GDP now from private sector; Oct, Yeltsin sends troops into Chechnya to prevent separation from Russia; Ukraine becomes first post-Soviet state to sign agreement of cooperation with EU; Leonid Kuchma becomes President of Ukraine; Aliaksandr Lukashenka elected President in Belarus	Dec, new Uzbek parliament ( <i>majlis</i> )	
	1995	“Loans for shares” round of privatization; treaty with Belarus allows Russian troops on Belarus soil, in return for subsidized oil and gas	New Kazakh constitution	
	1996	July, Yeltsin wins presidential election; Aug, Russian forces agree to withdraw from Chechnya; referendum gives President Lukashenka increased powers in Belarus	Formation of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)	Mongolian People’s Party defeated in elections for first time since 1921
	1997		Nazarbaev increases presidential control of regions	Agreement on Kazakhstan/China oil pipeline
	1998	July, Vladimir Putin appointed head of FSB (Security Services); Aug 17, Russia defaults on debts	Astana becomes Kazakh capital, Kazakh becomes first language of Kazakhstan	
	1999	Aug, Vladimir Putin appointed PM; Putin launches second war on Chechnya; Dec 31, Yeltsin resigns as President and appoints Putin acting President		
	2000	May, Putin elected President of the Russian Federation		

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# INDEX

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Page numbers referring to items in figures, maps, and tables are indicated by the suffix *f*, *m* or *t* respectively.

- Abdullah Khan II (r. 1583–1598), 107, 108
- Abul-Khayr, Khan (r. 1429–1467), 61–63, 107
- Afro-Eurasia
- global integration after 1500, 97
  - human societies in 1250, 3
  - trade circuits pre-1500, 4*m*
- agrarian regions
- advances after 1500, 119, 203, 569
  - agrarian crisis in Russia, 247
  - agrarian societies in 16th century, 119–138
  - balance of power with
    - nomadic/pastoral regions, 18, 77, 114, 145  - in Central Asia, 29
  - after Golden Horde, 76–78
  - Islam, 33
  - mobilization, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16*f*, 18, 77, 106
  - population increase, 5
  - Rus', 80
  - smychka*, 15, 17, 54, 76–78
  - state formation, 10, 16
  - trans-Eurasian contacts, 99, 104
- agriculture
- advantages over pastoral nomadism, 77
  - and commercial policy, 286, 507, 508*t*, 554
  - early development, 77, xxiv
  - economy based on, 39, 73, 76, 120, 199, 217, 388, 397, 476, 569
  - government control, 325, 353, 457, 461, 480
  - innovation, 437
  - irrigation, 6
  - land seizures, 321
  - limits on growth, 6, 162, 246, 252, 480, 483
  - Northerliness and, xxv*m*
  - “organic energy regime”, 233
  - organization of, 218, 350
  - productivity, xxv*m*, xxv*m*, 77, 485, 569
  - railways as market drivers of growth, 247
  - slavery and, 275
  - spread of, 144, 186, 569
  - support for, 8, 58, 108, 110, 186, 187, 188, 242, 300
- Akkerman, Ottoman capture of (1484), 120
- Alaska, 289
- Alexander I, Tsar (r. 1801–1825)
- army, 220
  - death (1825), 224
  - Napoleon and, 214, 222
  - King of Poland (1815), 215
- Alexander II, Tsar (r. 1855–1881)
- abolition of serfdom (1861), 243
  - assassination (1881), 255
  - Crimean War, 226, 241
  - “Great Reforms”, 242–245
- Alexander III, Tsar (r. 1881–1894), 254, 256, 263
- Alexander Nevskii, Prince of Novgorod, Grand Prince of Vladimir, 40, 81, 82, 395
- Alexei, Tsar (r. 1645–1676), 148, 149, 157, 158, 160, 164
- Alghu, Khan, 27, 31
- Algirdas (Olgerd) Prince of Lithuania (r. 1345–1377), 75
- Altan Khan (d. 1582), 100–104, 186
- Americas
- agriculture, 144
  - European diseases, 143
  - fur trade, 289
  - global integration after 1500, 97
  - human societies in 1250, 3
  - pastoralism, 192
  - Russian colonization, 289
  - smychka*, 192
  - trade with, 74, 155
- Amur river, Khabarov expedition to (1650's), 180
- Anatolia
- and Basmachi movement, 408
  - Ceshme, battle of (1770), 212
  - Karakorum and, 10
  - Ottoman rule, 73, 119
  - Timur invades (1404), 56, 58
  - trade, 112
- Andropov, Yuri, 449, 455
- Andrusovo, treaty of (1667), 160
- Archangel (port), 98, 133, 151, 155, 178, 312, 335, 336
- Ariq-Boke, Khan, 26, 31
- aristocracies and elites
- banking and credit, 418
  - building of, 57
  - elite discipline *see* elite discipline
  - Europeanization, 223
  - membership, 105

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*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Volume II: Inner Eurasia from the Mongol Empire to Today, 1260–2000*, First Edition. David Christian.

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- aristocracies and elites (*Continued*)  
 mobilization strategies, 11  
 monarchy and, 323  
 political framework for, 263  
 protection of, 211  
 urbanization, 34  
 wealth, 296
- armies *see* military organisation
- artisans and builders  
 mobilization, 7, 9  
 movements of, 32, 39, 83  
 settlements, 27, 28, 182, 253, 294  
 support for, 108, 110
- asabiyya* “group loyalty” (Arabic), 15
- Ashtarkhanid (Janid) dynasty, 108, 199
- Assembly of the Land *see* *Zemskii Sobor*
- Astrakhan  
 and Crimean khanate, 111, 112  
 and Ivan IV, 136  
 khanate of, 111  
 khans of, 108  
 Muscovite conquest of (1556), 126, 193  
 and Peter the Great, 166, 213  
 Saray and, 54  
 trade, 126, 133, 194, 197, 198, 272, 285
- Australasia  
 global integration after 1500, 97  
 human societies in 1250, 3
- Ayuka, Kalmyk leader (*tayishi*), 194
- Azerbaijan, as Inner Eurasian polity, 494
- Azov (Tana) (seaport), 38
- Baikal, Lake, 178
- Baraq, Khan, 31
- Bashkiria, Russian expansion, 195–197, 196*m*
- Batu, Khan (r. 1241–1255)  
 conquest of Pontic steppes (1237–1241), 36  
 family, 27, 41, 62  
 Golden Horde, 27, 35, 41  
 invasion of Rus’, 74, 78, 81, 86, 89, 148, 391, 423, 430  
 mobilization system, 35, 39  
 and Mongke Khan, 18  
*quriltai*, 9, 36, 87  
 reign, 41  
 successors, 31, 34, 36, 53, 54, 62  
 “*Ulus of Batu*”, 35, 37, 41
- Beijing (Daidu)  
 attacks on, 100  
 as capital city, 26, 27, 184, 555  
 secretariat, 18  
 travels to, 180, 182, 186, 294
- Belarus  
 independence after 1991, 539–543  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494
- Belgorod defence line (1635–1646), 128, 151, 162, 163*m*, 164
- Berdibeg, Khan (r. 1357–1359), 53
- Berke, Khan (r. 1258–1267)  
 attack on Il-Khanate (1262), 41  
 death (1267), 41  
 family, 9, 27  
 founds Christian bishopric in Saray (1261), 40  
 Golden Horde, 41  
 Muslim faith, 41  
 reign, 36, 41
- Besh-Baligh (city), tribute-taking at, 18
- Black Death  
 bubonic plague pandemics, 52*f*  
 climate change and, 49–53  
 demographic effects, 49, 53  
 and Little Ice Age, 50*f*  
 outbreaks, 53  
 spread, 52
- Black Sea, Ottoman control of, 120
- Blue Waters, battle of (1363), 54
- Brezhnev, Leonid, 387, 445, 452, 453, 455, 456, 464, 467, 475, 478
- Brezhnev doctrine, 464
- Brezhnev era, 457, 463, 477, 479, 498, 541, 546
- Britain  
 Archangel trade with Muscovy, 133  
 Black Death (1349), 52  
 Crimean War (1854–1856), 225–226, 241  
 India and, 270, 279, 280, 282, 300  
 Opium Wars (1839–1842), 225–226
- bubonic plague *see* Black Death
- Buddhism  
 Buriatia, 290  
 Dalai Lamas, 102, 185, 187, 189, 422, 559  
 Mongolia, 102, 183, 184, 185, 187, 296, 418, 421, 424, 426, 559  
 settlements, 31  
 Soviet suppression, 377, 433  
 Yellow Hat (Tibetan), 102, 108, 184, 185, 187
- builders *see* artisans and builders
- Bukhara  
 administration, 276  
 cultural influence, 200  
 Islam, 42, 63, 284, 404
- Janid (Ashtarkhanid) dynasty, 108, 199
- Kalmyk threat to, 193
- Kazakh rule, 63, 107
- Khorezm and, 200, 277
- loss of Ferghana valley, 200
- Mangit dynasty, 276
- population, 275
- reform, 276
- Russian expansion, 279
- slavery, 278
- Soviet rule, 405, 407, 408, 549
- trade, 197, 272, 278
- travellers’ descriptions of, 107 and Uzbekistan, 551
- “Bureau of Pacification”, 32
- Buriatia  
 Buddhism, 290  
 collective farms, 515  
 gold, 288  
 and Mongolian independence, 299  
 Russian army recruitment, 298  
 Russian rule, 290, 322  
 Siberian nationalism, 413  
 Soviet Autonomous Republic, 348  
 Stalinist purges, 426
- Buyr, Lake, battle of (1388), 28
- Buyunduk, Khan (r. 1480–1511), 63, 64, 105
- Caffa (seaport), 38, 52
- camels  
 caravans, 182, 197, 203, 251, 293  
 collective farms, 482  
 lorries instead of, 485  
 military use, 187, 394  
 pastoralism, 12
- capitalism and market driver of growth, 237
- caravans  
 curtailment of, 27  
 decline, 182  
 licensing, 186  
 protection of, 3, 37, 198, 199, 272  
 replacement by railways, 285, 286  
 taxation of, 37, 106  
 trans-Eurasian trade, 3, 9, 126, 182, 197, 198, 203, 272, 278, 288, 293, 428  
 travels by, 5, 427
- Carpini, Giovanni, 10, 36, 41
- Catherine I, Tsarina (r. 1725–1727), 168
- Catherine II, Tsarina (“the Great”) (r. 1762–1796), 168, 210–215, 222, 224, 226, 290, 318, 440

- Central Asia  
 after breakup of Mongol empire, 28  
 definition, xxxii  
 geography, 29  
 integration of empires and cultures, 4  
 mobilization systems, 13  
 Mongol Empire, 7  
 Mongolian civil war, 27  
 oases, xxiv, 6  
 pastoralism, 12, 29  
 regions, xxxii, xxxiii  
*smychka*, 18, 28, 29, 32  
*ulus*, 23, 26, 27  
 urbanization, xxxii  
 Yuan dynasty, 28
- Chabar, Khan, 32
- Chagatay, Khan, 27, 30, 31, 109
- Chagatay Khanate  
 breakup, 32, 33  
 elite discipline, 34  
 extent, 30*m*  
 following Qaidu's rule, 32–34  
 and Golden Horde, 38, 40, 41  
 Qaidu's reign, 31, 32  
 during Qaidu's rule, 31–32  
 Qaidu's successors, 32–34  
*smychka*, 30  
 Timur reunites (1370), 34, 57  
 Timur's rule (1370–1405), 58  
 treaty of 1303, 34  
*ulus* of Chagatay, 29–31
- Chernenko, Konstantin, 454, 456
- China, Empire (to 1911)  
 decline and collapse 1750–1911, 293–302  
 global integration, 1750–1850, 209–210  
 hegemony over Mongolia, 183  
 influence on Inner Eurasia, xxxiii  
 Manchu dynasty *see* Qing dynasty  
 Milescu's visit to (1674), 180  
 military technology, 17  
 Ming dynasty *see* Ming dynasty  
 mobilization, military, 12  
 Mongol conquest of, 18  
 and Mongolia *see* Mongolia  
 Muscovy and, 180–183  
 Opium Wars (1839–1842), 225–226  
 Petlin's visit to (1619), 101, 180  
 Qing dynasty *see* Qing dynasty  
 and Xinjiang *see* Xinjiang  
 Yuan dynasty *see* Yuan dynasty  
 and Zunghar empire, 186–192
- China, People's Republic (1949–present)  
 Islam, 488  
 Xinjiang, 432
- China, Republic (1911–1949)  
 Mongolia and, 418–420  
 Xinjiang and, 427–432
- Chinggis Khan (r. 1206–1227)  
 birth, 486  
 death (1227), 7  
 elite discipline, 167, 334, 357, 362  
 family, 4, 9, 14, 18, 25*f*, 27, 65  
 great *quriltai* (1206), 28, 87  
 Karakorum, building of, 8  
*Keshig* (royal bodyguard), 15, 33, 42, 57, 135, 165, 361, 387  
 leadership strengths, 23, 24, 56, 57, 62, 71  
 military organization, 184  
 as mobilizer, 11, 17, 61  
 and modern Mongolia, 564  
 and Mongolian nationalism, 486, 559  
 religion, 31  
 rise of, 6, 7  
 Stalin and, 357, 378, 387  
 successors, 10, 18, 24, 26, 30, 34, 36  
 Timur compared, 56  
 Uighur kingdom, 431  
 Uighur officials, 37  
*uymaq* (entourage, retinue), 57  
*uymaq* “entourage, retinue”, 374  
 youth, 6
- Chinggisid family  
 decline, 24  
 fall of Mongol Empire, 23  
 genealogy, 25*f*, 26  
 Mongke Khan's purge (1251), 18, 30  
 treaty of 1303, 32
- Christianity  
 Nestorian *see* Nestorian  
 Christianity  
 Orthodox *see* Orthodox Church  
 Saray bishopric (1261), 40
- chronology, xxxiv
- Circassians, 213
- climate  
 climate change to 2000, 6*f*  
 climate change and Black Death, 49–53  
*dzhut* (climatic shock), 7  
 and Eurasian integration, 5  
 Little Ice Age, 143  
 “Medieval Climate Anomaly”, 6
- Cold War, globalization and, 439
- commerce, mobilization and, xxx
- commercial policy, agriculture and, 286, 507, 508*t*, 554
- Communism  
 abolition of market driver of growth, 239, 440  
 China *see* China, People's Republic  
 Mongolia *see* Mongolia  
 reintroduction of market driver of growth, 453, 456, 496  
 Russia *see* Soviet Union
- Constantinople  
 and Orthodox Church, 226  
 Ottoman conquest (1453), 74
- Cossacks  
 attack on Sibir (1581), 176  
 first formal contacts with Muscovy (1557), 127  
 in Muscovite service, 132  
 reach Sea of Okhotsk (1641), 178
- Crimean khanate  
 attack on Kiev (1482), 76  
 formation (1449), 72  
 Great Horde defeated by (1502), 72, 86  
 heartland, 42  
 importance, 110  
 Kalmyk raids on, 163  
 Lithuania/Poland attacked by, 76, 111, 121  
 mobilization strengths, 111  
 Moscow allied with, 76  
 Muscovy attacked by, 111, 112, 146  
 Muscovy conquest of, 212  
 Muscovy expansion against, 127, 159, 161  
 Ottoman protectorate over (1475), 73, 76, 111, 120  
 slavery, 113  
*smychka*, 112, 113, 123  
 in Ukraine, 533
- Crimean War (1854–1856), 225–226, 241
- Daidu *see* Beijing
- Dalai Lama *see* Buddhism
- Damascus, 15, 56, 58, 59
- Daniil, Prince of Moscow (r. 1261–1303), 82
- Dayan Khan (r. 1480?–1517?), 99–100
- decolonization, globalization and, 439
- demography  
 agrarian regions, 5  
 and Eurasian integration, 5  
 global population levels to 1800, 5*f*

- demography (*Continued*)  
 Inner Eurasian distinctiveness, xxvi  
 population density, xxvi  
 population growth to late 13th century, 5  
 population levels, xxviii, xxviii  
 discipline  
 elite discipline *see* elite discipline  
 in mobilizational systems, 15
- Dmitri (Donskoi), 75  
 Dmitrii, Prince (d. 1591), 146  
 Dmitrii, Prince of Moscow (r. 1359–1389), 55
- drivers of growth  
 capitalism and, 237  
 Communism and, 239, 351  
 fossil fuels revolution and, 237, 570  
 global markets as, 570  
 globalization as, 209, 569  
 heartland regions as, xxxii, xxxiii, 209  
 Industrial Revolution, 237  
 market driver *see* market driver of growth  
 military forces as, 219  
 mobilization and, 237
- Du'a Khan, 32, 34  
*dzhut* (climatic shock), 7
- ecology  
 Inner Eurasian distinctiveness, xxiv  
 zone of ecological symbiosis, 13*m*
- economic reform, and elite discipline, 243
- Edigu, Khan (r. 1395–1420)  
 ancestry, 62  
 death (1420), 36, 55, 62  
 defeats Vitautas at Vorskla river (1399), 75  
 reign, 55  
 succeeds Toqtamish, 55  
 Timur and, 54
- Egypt *see* Mamluk dynasty
- elite discipline  
 building of, 57  
 and economic reform, 243  
 importance of, 125  
 maintenance of, 18, 92, 136  
 mobilization and, 13, 83, 323, 358, 445  
*oprichnina*, 136  
*smychka* and, 16  
 tradition of, 243, 323, 334, 358  
 unity and, 133, 367
- elites *see* aristocracies and elites
- Elizabeth, Tsarina (r. 1741–1762), 168, 210, 213, 222
- Emir Timur *see* Timur
- empires, largest, xxix*f*
- Erdeni Baatur Khung-Taiji, Oirat Emperor (r. 1635–1653), 180, 186–187, 198
- Ermak, Ataman, 177
- Esen, Khan (r. 1438–1454), 66, 186
- Eurasia  
 integration of empires and cultures, 3  
 trans-continental travel, 5
- Europe  
 Black Death (1349), 52  
 decolonization, 439  
 as driver of growth, 209  
 trans-Eurasian contacts, 5, 9, 23
- Europeanization of Russian nobility, 167–168
- Fedor I, Tsar (r. 1584–1598), 145, 146, 147, 317
- Fedor II, Tsar (r. 1676–1682), 149
- fossil fuels revolution  
 and drivers of growth, 237, 570  
 global impact of, 233–239  
 globalization and, 570  
 in Inner Eurasia, 239–240  
 and market driver of growth, 239  
 mobilization and, xxx  
 theme of, xxxi
- France *see* Napoleon
- Galdan Boshugtu Khan (r. 1678–1697), 181, 185–189, 191, 198, 201
- Genghis Khan *see* Chinggis Khan
- geography  
 Inner Eurasian distinctiveness, xxvii  
 major regions of Inner Eurasia, xxxii  
 mobilization and, 13  
 spelling, xxxiv  
 terminology, xxxii
- Germany *see* Hitler, Adolf
- Giray *see* Mengli-Giray
- glasnost* “openness” (Russian)  
 concept, 456, 462  
 impact, 463  
 Mongolia and, 557  
 post-1991, 534
- global markets as drivers of growth, 570
- globalization  
 after breakup of Soviet Union, 493–495  
 and Cold War, 439
- decolonization and, 439  
 as driver of growth, 569  
 entry of Russia and China, 1750–1850, 209–210  
 first global world system, sixteenth century, 97–98  
 and fossil fuels revolution, 570  
 “Great Acceleration” after 1950, 437  
 and Inner Eurasia as continuing concept, 569–571  
 late twentieth century, 437–440  
 and market driver of growth, 570  
 seventeenth century, 143, 144
- Godunov, Boris, Tsar (r. 1598–1605), 128, 146, 147
- Golden Horde  
 Black Death (1346), 52, 53  
 borderlands, 74  
 breakup, 43, 49, 53–55, 62, 75  
 capital city, 126  
 and Crimean khanate, 86, 113  
 evolution, 41–42  
 extent, 35*m*  
 formation, 23, 27, 35  
 “Great Troubles” (1360–1380), 54, 278  
 heartlands, 105, 193  
 Ivan Daniilovich and, 82  
 Kulikovo, battle of (1380), 55, 84  
 Mongol empire compared, 37, 53  
 Moscow and, 55, 84  
 and Orthodox Church, 40  
 Qubilai and, 27  
 Rus’ and, 78, 78–81  
 structure, 35–41  
 successor states, 71, 76, 110, 111, 112, 212  
 Timur and, 58  
 “Uzbek” people, 62
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, 451, 455, 455–458, 464–466, 468, 475, 498, 545 *see also glasnost; perestroika*
- gosudarstvennost* “strong stateism” (Russian), 324
- Great Horde (Kazakh) *see* Kazakh Great Horde
- Great Horde (Mongol)  
 destruction by Crimean khanate (1502), 72, 86, 111  
 emergence, 71  
 Muscovy and, 84, 86  
 successor states, 111  
 “Great Troubles” (1360–1380), 54, 278
- Guyug, Khan (r. 1246–1248), 9, 18, 386

- Haqq-Nazar, Khan (r. 1538–1580), 105, 106
- heartland regions  
as drivers of growth, xxxii, xxxiii, 209  
“heartland” of Inner Eurasia defined, xxxiii  
Mongolia as heartland, 26  
Russia as Inner Eurasian “heartland”, xxxiii
- history, historiography, xxxiv  
chronology, xxxiv  
first global world system, sixteenth century, 97–98  
human societies in 1250, 3–7  
nationalist, xxiv  
spelling, xxxiv  
synoptic, xxiii
- Hitler, Adolf, xxvii, 391–394
- Hohehot (Kokhe-Khota) (city), 100, 101
- Hulegu, Il-Khan, 18, 23, 27, 41
- Ibn Battuta, 5, 33, 37, 38, 40, 41
- Ibn Khaldûn, 15
- Il-Khanate  
administration, 42  
and Alghu Khanate expansionism, 31  
Berke’s attack on (1262), 41  
collapse (from 1335), 42, 53  
diplomatic relations with Europe, 5, 23  
rulers, 23  
supports Qubilai Khan, 27  
and Temür Khan, 33
- India  
British rule, 270, 279, 280, 282, 300  
Bukhara and, 200  
Ibn Battuta journeys to, 5  
Muscovy and, 133  
and Peter the Great, 169, 201  
Timur attacks (1398), 56, 58  
trade, 59, 107, 108, 109, 126, 203, 278, 286  
trans-Eurasian contacts, 3
- Industrial Revolution and drivers of growth, 237
- Inner Eurasia  
agrarian era (1260–1850), 1  
central themes, xxi  
continuing concept of, 569–571  
extent, xxi, xxiii, xxiiim  
fossil fuel era (1859–2000), 231  
geographical concept, xxiii  
geographical distinctiveness, xxiv  
and globalization *see* globalization  
“heartland”, xxxiii
- historiography, xxiii  
new states after 1991, 493–495  
Outer Eurasian geography  
compared, xxiv  
population *see* demography  
regional divisions, xxxii, xxxiiim  
institutional modernization and market driver of growth, 237  
interiority, rainfall and, xxviii  
irrigation agriculture, 6
- Islam  
Abu-Bakr first caliph, 62  
Central Asian forms, 108, 195, 202  
chief regional cities, 60  
and Communist China, 488  
fundamentalism, 544, 545, 546, 550, 556  
identification as Muslims, 104  
*iqta* system of land grants, 87  
Jadidist movement, 404, 409, 430  
post-Soviet resurgence, 478, 546  
and Russian expansionism, 216, 273, 282, 283, 284, 301  
shamanism and, 108, 202  
and Soviet Union, 330, 377, 395, 406, 410, 412  
spread of, 4, 33, 34, 35, 42, 56, 60, 72, 195  
Sufism *see* Sufism  
trans-Eurasian travellers, 5  
understanding of, 104  
and Yang Zengxin, 428
- Ivan, Tsarevich, murder of (1581), 146
- Ivan Daniilovich, Grand Prince of Moscow (1327), 82
- Ivan III (The Great), Grand Prince of Moscow (r. 1462–1505), 85–91, 111, 112, 122, 130
- Ivan IV (The Terrible) Tsar of Muscovy (r. 1547–1584)  
and Anthony Jenkinson, 108  
and Assemblies of the Land, 157  
and Baltic, 169  
brutality, 136, 137  
and Circassians, 213  
conquers Astrakhan, 126  
conquers Kazan’ khanate (1552), 72, 85, 126  
and Cossacks, 127, 162  
creates Simeon Bekbulatovich as Grand Prince of Rus’ (1575), 136  
and Crimean khanate, 127  
crowned as “Tsar” (1547), 86  
death (1584), 146  
death of first wife (Anastasia Romanovna, 1560), 135, 213  
and elite discipline, 125  
establishes fort at Tersk (1567), 127, 213  
extension of fortified lines, 128  
founds *strel’tsy* (elite infantry), 132  
law code (*sudebnik*) of 1550, 134  
Livonia campaign (1558–1583), 129, 166, 169, 176  
local government reforms, 148, 245  
minority, 125, 359  
murders Tsarevich Ivan (1581), 146  
*oprichnina see oprichnina*  
Peter the Great compared, 164, 166  
and serfdom, 154  
Stalin compared, 361, 362  
successors, 145, 146, 147
- Ivan V, Tsar (r. 1682–1696), 149
- Janibeg, Khan (r. 1342–1357), 42, 52, 53
- Janid (Ashtarkhanid) dynasty, 108, 199
- Japan  
Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), 258, 292, 302, 311, xxxf  
Soviet victory in Manchuria (1939), 423
- Jebsundamba Khutugtu *see* Zanabazar
- Jenkinson, Anthony, 107
- Jochi Khan, 34
- Juvaini, Ata-Malek, 7, 9, 10, 17, 30
- Kaiping (Shangdu, Xanadu), 26
- Kalmyk  
Bukhara and, 193  
migration to Nogai steppe (1630), 193  
Russian expansion, 193–195  
treaty with Muscovy (1655), 193  
treaty with Muscovy (1669), 194
- Kama River region, 176
- Karabalghasun (city), 8
- Karakorum  
Buddhism, 103  
building of (1235), 8, 9, 41, 102  
as capital city (1235–1266), xxxiii, 7, 8f, 26, 37, 40, 43  
Carpini’s journey to (1246), 10, 36, 41  
cosmopolitanism, 9  
decline, 27  
destruction, 28  
elections of Khans, 9, 26  
famine, 27

- Karakorum (*Continued*)  
 lamasery of Erdeni Zuu, 103, 185, 294, 296  
 Marco Polo's journey to (early 1270s), 9  
 Oirat rule, 65  
 population, 9  
 Qubilai Khan's aid to, 28  
*quriltai* of 1246, 9  
*quriltai* of 1260, 26  
 reconstruction of, 8*f*  
 spelling, xxxiv  
 tax revenues, 39  
 travellers' descriptions, 9  
 wealth, 9  
 Yuan dynasty rule, 28
- Kasim Khan (r. c.1509–1523), 63–64, 85, 105
- Kazakh confederation, 105
- Kazakh dynasty  
 code of laws (*Zhety Zhargy*), 198  
 conquest of Siber (1563), 176  
 expansion, 64, 107, 108  
 foundation (1467), 63, xxiv
- Kazakh Great Horde  
 foundation (1523), 105  
 Kenisary revolt (1837–46), 273  
 Oirat attacks on, 189, 198  
 Russian conquest of, 273  
 and Russian expansion, 271
- Kazakh hordes, 105
- Kazakh steppes  
 confederations, 61, 105  
 extent, 29  
 hordes, 105  
 khans, 105  
 mobilization, 61–64, 104–106  
 region, xxxii  
 Russian expansion, 196*m*, 197–199, 270–275  
*smychka*, 105
- Kazakhstan  
 economic development after 1950, 474–479  
 independence after 1991, 531, 543–554  
 Russian rule, 403–405  
 Semirechie region, 29, xxxii  
 Soviet rule, 405–412, 474–479  
 Virgin Lands Program, 474
- Kebeg, Khan (r. 1309, 1318–1326), 33, 82
- Kenisary revolt (1837–46), 273
- Keshig* (Mongolian royal guard), 15, 33, 42, 57, 135, 165, 361, 387
- Khabarov expedition to Amur river (1650's), 180
- Khiva  
 agriculture, 201  
 army, 276  
 capital city, 107, 200  
 defeats Peter the Great (1717), 169  
 defeats Russian force (1839), 277  
 Kalmyk raids on, 193  
 Kazakh attack on, 198  
 population, 275  
 regional dynasty, 199  
 Russian legal reform, 282  
 Russian protectorate (1873), 281  
 Russian settlers, 407  
 Russian trade mission (1858), 279  
 slavery, 201, 278  
 and Soviet Union, 407, 408  
 trade, 193, 200, 272  
 Turkic language, 201  
 and Turkmen nomads, 201
- Khmelnitskii, Bogdan, 151, 152, 159, 185
- Khorezm  
 Abul-Khayr's raid on (1431), 62  
 armies, 42  
 Black Death (1345), 52  
 Bukhara and, 200, 277  
 capital city, 107, 200  
 caravans, 37  
 destruction (1388), 37  
 economic power, 37  
 "Great Troubles", 54  
 independence, 54, 107  
 Karakorum and, 37  
 and Khiva *see* Khiva  
 Khorezmiyan People's Soviet Republic, 407  
 Qongrat dynasty, 277  
 Russian protectorate (1873), 107  
 Saray and, 54, 55  
 Soviet Union, 407  
*uluses*, 34, 36  
 Yadigarid dynasty, 107, 200
- Khotan (city), Yuan forces leave (1289), 32
- Khwaja Ahrar, 107
- khvajjas* (Sufi teachers), 109, 110, 201
- Kiev  
 and Chernobyl disaster (1986), 462  
 distances from, 37  
 and Khmelnitskii revolt (1648), 160  
 Lithuanian capture (1362), 75  
 Lithuanian control, 84  
 Lithuanian threat, 82  
 Muscovy and, 161  
 spelling, xxxiv  
 Stolypin assassination (1911), 263  
 trade, 75
- Ukrainian election protests (2004), 538
- Ukrainian independence (1991), 535  
 and Ukrainian nationalism, 322, 534
- Kievan Rus'  
 Batu's invasion (1237), 78  
 borderland culture, 127  
 Crimean attack on (1482), 76  
 economic weakness, 79  
 forts and fortification lines, 89, 128  
 fur trade, 79  
 and Golden Horde, 78  
 Lithuania and, 54, 75  
 military weakness, 80  
 mobilization, 34, 78  
 monarchical weakness, 79  
 political divisions, 78  
 and Pontic steppes, 212  
 population growth, 7  
*smychka*, 78  
 and Ukrainian nationalism, 258  
 urban centres, 34  
 and Volga Bulgaria, 72  
 western borderlands, 6
- Kokhe-Khota (Hohehot) (city), 100, 101
- "Komsomol" economy, 518
- Kreva, Union of Lithuania and Poland, (1385), 74, 75
- Khrushchev, Nikita, 249, 383, 386, 387, 441–445, 448, 453–456, 462, 474–475
- Kublai Khan *see* Qubilai Khan
- Kuchum Khan, 176–177
- Kulikovo, battle of (1380), 55, 84
- Kurbskii, Andrei, Prince, 134, 135
- Kyrgyzstan  
 independence after 1991, 543–554  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494
- land seizures, 321
- largest world empires, xxix*f*
- Lenin, Vladimir, xxi, 253, 256, 257, 291, 310, 319, 322, 323, 326–328, 331–334, 344–350
- Ligdan Khan (r. 1604–1634), 184
- Ling-pei (Chinese province of Mongolia), 28
- Lithuania (to 1385)  
*For Union with Poland see*  
 Lithuania/Poland (1385–1795)
- Blue Waters, battle of (1363), 54  
 capture of Kiev (1362), 75  
 foundation (1240–1263), 74  
 and Golden Horde, 55

- as Inner Eurasian polity, 74  
and Moscow Principality, 83  
rise of, 53, 54, 74, 82  
and Tver' Principality, 76, 82
- Lithuania/Poland (1385–1795)  
Andrei Kurbskii flees to, 135  
Andrusovo treaty with Muscovy (1667), 160  
aristocracy (*szlachta*), 121  
Belarus and, 539  
conflicting political and economic directions, 122  
and Crimean khanate, 72, 111, 112, 127  
cultural diversity, 113  
decline, 144  
economy, 120  
emergence and expansion, 74–76  
expansion in West, 159  
extent, 120  
extinction, 211  
former territories in modern Ukraine, 533  
as Inner Eurasian polity, 74, 119, 120–122, 494  
and Kazan' khanate, 72  
military success, 122  
mobilization potential, 121  
mobilization system, 120  
monarchical power, 122  
Moscow (Principality) and, xxxiii, 75, 84  
Muscovy and, 86, 87, 90, 91, 125, 127, 129, 132, 134, 135, 137, 144, 148, 149, 151, 152  
Muscovy truce (1618), 149  
Muscovy war (1654–1667), 160  
Orthodox Church, 75, 120, 121  
and Ottoman empire, 76, 120  
as Outer Eurasian polity, 119, 494  
partitions of, 169, 211  
population, 120  
rise of, 71, 119  
and Russian Empire, 168, 179  
slave raids from Pontic steppes, 73, 113, 120  
territorial losses, 122  
Union of Kreva (1385), 74, 75  
Union of Lublin (1569), 121, 132  
Vitautas, Grand Duke *see* Vitautas
- Lithuania (1795 to present)  
census of 1897, 322  
independence (1918), 337  
and Ukrainian nationalism, 258  
World War I, 312, 322
- Little Ice Age, 143
- Liu Ming (Chinese architect of Karakorum), 8
- Livonia  
Muscovite campaign in (1558–1583), 129, 166, 169, 176  
war between Muscovy and Sweden (1590), 146
- Lublin, Union of Lithuania and Poland (1569), 121, 132
- mahallas* (urban neighborhoods), 202, 280, 282, 478
- Mahmud Yalavach, 10, 30, 574
- maliks* (local kings), 32
- Mamaq, Emir  
capital city (Saray), 54  
death (1381), 54, 55  
defeat by Moscow at Kulikovo (1380), 55, 84  
defeat by Toqtamish (1381), 55  
reign, 54
- Mamluk dynasty (Egypt)  
defeats Mongol army at 'Ain Jalut (1260), 574  
embassy to Berke Khan (1263–1264), 36  
slave trade with, 38  
Sultan Baybars alliance with Berke Khan, 41
- Manchu dynasty *see* Qing dynasty
- Manchuria  
Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), 258, 292, 302, 311, xxxf  
Soviet defeat of Japan (1939), 423
- Mangit dynasty, 276
- Mao Zedong, 395, 432, 454, 488
- market driver of growth  
capitalism and, 237  
Communist abolition of, 239, 440  
Communist reintroduction of, 453, 456, 496  
drivers of growth, 440  
fossil fuels revolution and, 239  
globalization and, 570  
and “Great Reforms” of Alexander II, 242  
institutional modernization and, 237  
mobilization and, 237, 251  
and monopoly over resources, 251  
neoliberalism and, 495  
railways and, 247  
Russian industrialization and, 245, 253
- Marx, Karl, xxx, 77, 237, 337, 352, 547, 570
- Marxism, 342, 451, 510
- Mas'ud Beg, 30
- “Medieval Climate Anomaly”, 6
- Mendovg (Mindaugas), 74
- Mengu-Temur, Khan (r. 1267–1280), 31, 38, 41
- Mesopotamia, Mongol conquest, 18
- mestnichestvo* “family precedence” (Russian), 87, 130, 157, 478
- Metropolitan Peter, 83
- migrations, agriculture and, 5, 6, xxiv
- Mikhail Yaroslavich, Grand Prince of Tver' (1304), 82
- Milescu, Nikolay Gavrilovich, 180
- military organization  
alliances, 13  
elite discipline, 14  
mobilization, 7, 12  
*smychka* and, 15
- Mindaugas (Mendovg), 74
- Ming dynasty  
conquest of Mongolia, 28  
trade agreement with Altan Khan (1571), 100  
trade with Oirat, 65
- mobilization  
agrarian regions, 12, 16f, 18  
central theme of, xxxi  
commerce and, xxx  
concept of, xxvii  
and drivers of growth, 237  
and elite discipline, 13  
and fossil fuels revolution, xxx  
geography of, 13  
global speedup in seventeenth century, 144  
and market driver of growth, 251  
military campaigns, 7, 12  
“mobilization pump”, xxxf  
progress of, xxxi  
reason for success, puzzle as to, 10  
*smychka* and, 15–18  
in steppes, 12–15  
systems of, 10–11  
as “tribute-taking”, 14, xxix  
“Moghulistan”, definition, xxxii
- Mongke, Khan (r. 1251–1259)  
and Batu Khan, 18  
death (1259), 23, 26  
empire of, 7, 18  
great seal (*tamga*), 26, 27  
lack of successor, 24  
purge of Chinggisid family (1251), 18, 30  
and Qaidu Khan, 31
- Mongol empire  
breakup, 494  
capital city *see* Karakorum  
Chinese military technology, adoption of, 17  
Chinggisid family *see* Chinggisid family



- Mongol empire (*Continued*)  
 economic organisation, 14  
 elections of Khans, 9  
 elite discipline, 14  
 and Eurasian integration, 4  
 fall of, xxii, xxiii, xxxiii, 3, 23–26, 43, 147, 440, 454, 493  
 foundation, 7  
 Golden Horde compared, 37, 53  
 greatest extent, xxxiii, 3, 7–10, 25*m*, 269, 395  
 kinship, 14  
 leadership, 14  
 military campaigns, 5, 7, 18  
 military technology transfer, 88, 239  
 mobilization, artisans and builders, 7  
 mobilization, economic, 4  
 mobilization, final years of empire, 18  
 mobilization, military, 7, 17  
 mobilization, systems, 10  
 Mongolia as heartland of, 26  
 purges, 18  
 rapid rise, xxii, 6, 7, 178  
 reason for success, puzzle as to, 10  
 secretariats, 18  
*smychka*, 23  
 Soviet Union compared, 473  
 trade networks, 4  
 and Yuan China, 26–28
- Mongolia  
 after breakup of empire, 26  
 Buddhism, 102, 183, 184, 185, 187, 296, 418, 421, 424, 426, 559  
 as Chinese province of Ling-pei, 38  
 Chinese rule 1750–1900, 293–299  
 Chinggis Khan as national symbol, 486, 559  
 civil war, 27  
 climate, 6  
 Communist rule, beginnings to 1930, 418–423  
 decline under Yuan dynasty, 28  
 defeat by Ming dynasty, 28  
 definition, xxxiii  
 economic development after 1950, 480–486  
 empire *see* Mongol empire  
 geography, 26  
*glasnost* and, 557  
 as “heartland”, 26  
 Islam, 33  
 Khalkha *see* Khalkha  
 migrations, 28  
 nationalism, 486, 559
- Oirat *see* Oirat; Zunghar Empire  
*perestroika* and, 557, 558  
 Qing dynasty claim to, 293  
 reform and independence after 1985, 557–564  
 rent-seeking, 498  
 Russian and Soviet influence, 417–426  
 sixteenth-century, 99–104  
 Stalinism 1930–1950, 423–426  
 Virgin Lands Program, 483  
 after Yuan dynasty, 65–66
- Mongolian steppes, xxxii  
 monopoly over resources, 251  
 Moscow, Principality of (to 1500)  
*For post-1500 period see* Muscovy  
 Black Death (1353), 53  
 civil war of succession (1433–1453), 84  
 and Crimean khanate, 76  
 economic growth during fifteenth century, 89–92  
 elite discipline, 147  
 expansion during fifteenth century, 84–92  
 grants of land, 87  
 Kulikovo, battle of (1380), 55, 84  
 Lithuania and, 75, 84, xxxiii  
*mestnichestvo* (family precedence), 87, 130  
 mobilization strengths, 87–89  
 Orthodox Church, 83, 85  
 reference to, xxxiii  
 rise, 1240–1400, 81–84  
 Toqtamish sacks (1382), 84, 88  
 Tver’ and, 82, 86
- Muhammad Shibani Khan  
 (r. 1496–1510, 63–64, 107, 108)
- Muscovy (1500 to 1700)  
*For pre-1500 period see* Moscow,  
 Principality of  
 Andrusovo treaty with Lithuania/  
 Poland (1667), 160  
 Archangel trade with Europe, 98, 133  
 Assembly of the Land (*Zemskii Sobor*), 135, 147, 157  
 attack on Smolensk (1632), 151  
 ban on peasants leaving landlords for 1 year (1581), 137, 153  
 and Bashkiria, 195–197, 196*m*  
 Belgorod defence line, 162, 163*m*  
 China and, 180–183  
 and Circassians, 213  
 Code of Laws (1497), 91  
 coinage riots of 1656, 1662, 157  
 conquers Astrakhan, 126, 193  
 conquers Kazan’ khanate (1552), 72, 85, 126
- and Cossacks, 127  
 and Crimean khanate, 111, 112, 127, 146, 159, 161, 212  
 decree allowing forcible return of all peasants who had moved in last 5 years (1597), 146  
 and elite discipline, 125  
 elite discipline, 133–136, 156–159  
 expansion during sixteenth century, 124–130, 124*m*  
 expansion eastwards in seventeenth century, 175–183  
 expansion westward in seventeenth century, 159–161, 160*m*  
 extension of fortified lines, 128  
 famine (1601–1602), 146  
 fort at Tersk (1567), 127, 213  
 fort at Tobolsk (1601), 177  
 fort at Tomsk (1604), 177  
 fort at Turukhansk (1607), 178  
 forts and fortification lines, 128, 162–163  
 forts at Belgorod (1635–1646), 128, 151, 162, 163*m*, 164  
 and Great Horde, 84, 86  
 India and, 133  
 as Inner Eurasian “heartland”, xxxiii  
 and Kalmyk, 193–195  
 and Kazakh steppes, 196*m*, 197–199  
 Khabarov expedition to Amur river (1650’s), 180  
 and Khmel’nitskii revolt, 160  
 Lake Baikal reached (1631), 178  
 law code (*sudebnik*) of 1550, 134  
 Lithuania/Poland war (1654–1667), 160  
 Livonia campaign (1558–1583), 129, 166, 169, 176  
 Livonia War with Sweden (1590), 146  
 local government reforms, 148, 245  
*mestnichestvo* (family precedence), 157, 478  
 Milescu’s visit to China (1674), 180  
 mobilization, 123–124  
 mobilization, economic, 132–133, 152–156  
 mobilization, military, 130–132, 150–152  
 mobilization, system collapse, 137–138, 145–147  
 mobilization, system recovery, 147–149

- mobilization, system renewal, 149–159  
 “National” army (1611–1612), 147  
 “New Formation” military units, 151, 152  
*oprichnina* see *oprichnina*  
 Orthodox Church, 134, 147, 157, 158, 159  
 Ottoman empire, war with (1676–1681), 161  
 Petlin’s visit to China (1619), 101, 180  
 population growth, 123*f*, 152  
 reference to, xxxiii  
 riots of 1648, 157  
 Riurikid dynasty ends (1598), 108, 145  
 serfdom, 153  
 Siberia conquest, 90, 175–183, 177*m*  
 in sixteenth century, 123–138  
*smychka*, 123  
 southern expansion, 161–164  
 southern frontier by 1700, 129*m*  
 Stenka Razin revolt (1671), 162, 164  
*strel’tsy* (elite infantry), 132  
*strel’tsy* revolt (1698), 165  
 Time of Troubles (1598–1603), 145–147  
 Transoxiana and, 196*m*  
 truce with Lithuania/Poland (1618), 149  
 truce with Sweden (1617), 149  
 Tula armaments factory (1632), 151  
 Tula arsenal founded (1632), 151  
 Tver’ and, 55  
 Ugra river, battle of (1480), 86  
 Ugrians and Voguls, conquest of (1499), 90  
 Urals iron production begins (1630), 151  
 and Urals region, 195–197  
 westward expansion, 159–161, 160*m*  
 Yakutsk founded (1632), 178  
*Zemskii Sobor* (Assembly of the Land), 135, 147, 157  
 and Zunghar Empire, 180, 181
- Nakshab (Qarshi) (city), 33  
 Napoleon (Bonaparte), xxvii, 214–215, 223  
 Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, 60, 103, 108, 216  
 Narva, battle of (1700), 165, 241
- “National” army (Muscovy, 1611–1612), 147  
 nationalist historiographies, xxiv  
 neoliberalism, 454, 495, 517  
 Nestorian Christianity  
   missionary activities, 5  
   Qaidu Khanate, 31  
 New Saray see Saray  
 new states after 1991  
   choice between neoliberal and Chinese models of reform, 495–496  
   economic challenges for, 501–510  
   elite continuity, 496–499  
   globalization and, 493–495  
   political challenges for, 500–501, 531  
 Nicholas I, Tsar (r. 1825–1855), 220, 221, 224, 225, 226, 241, 263, 270, 291  
 Nicholas II, Tsar (r. 1894–1917), 254, 255, 259, 312, 314, 317  
 Nikon, Patriarch, 55, 157, 158  
 Nogai steppe, Kalmyk migration to (1630), 193
- nomadism  
   advantages of agriculture over, 77  
   balance of power with agrarian regions, 18, 77, 114, 145  
   inherent instability, 7  
   mobilization, 10  
*nomenklatura* (Soviet leadership cadre)  
   and Belarusian nationalism, 540  
   collectivization and, 380  
   co-option through, 463  
   dissent within, 449  
   elite continuity post-1991, 496, 497, 498, 517, 519, 531, 535, 541, 545, 546  
   and elite discipline, 15, 223, 361, 367, 411  
   oligarchs and, 517  
   and Peter the Great’s Table of Ranks, 360, 367  
   power and privilege, 440, 445, 448  
   purpose, 360  
   regional indigenous elites, 477  
   and regional policy, 473  
 Northerliness and agricultural productivity, xxv*m*  
 Novgorod  
   Alexander Nevskii becomes prince, 81  
   Black Death (1352), 53  
   escape from Mongol invasion, 39  
   fur trade, 80  
   Ivan IVs sack and massacre (1570), 136
- Lithuania and, 76  
 mobilizational weakness, 81  
 Mongol dominance, 81  
 Muscovite attack (1471), 87  
 Muscovite conquest (1478), 86, 88, 90  
*oprichnina* devastation of, 132, 136  
 population, 81  
 population decline, 137  
 trade decline, 55  
 trade networks, 39, 53, 82, 83
- oases  
   mobilization, 107  
   oases societies in 16th century, 97–114  
   population growth, 6  
   *smychka*, 106  
 Ogodei, Khan (r. 1227–1241)  
   builds Karakorum (1235), 8, 9, 102  
   death (1241), 36  
   family, 18, 30, 31  
   religion, 31, 102  
   succeeds Chinggis Khan (1227), 23  
   successors, 31  
   *ulus*, 31
- Oirat  
   Altan Khan’s suzerainty (late 1550’s), 100  
   Buddhism, 187  
   collapse, 65, 66  
   decline, 99, 105  
   defeat by China in Zunghar wars, 145, 183  
   defeat by Dayan Khan (1510), 100  
   defeat of Abul-Khayr (1457), 63  
   defeat of Khalkha (1688), 181, 185  
   emergence, 61, 65–66  
   hegemony over Mongolia, 65  
   invasion of China (1449), 66  
   invasion of eastern Mongolia (1452/3), 66  
   as Kalmyk, 126  
   mobilization, 61  
   Muscovy and, 180  
   *quriltai* at Tarbagatai (1640), 184  
   trade, 65  
   Zunghar Empire see Zunghar Empire  
 Okhotsk, Cossacks arrive at (1641), 178  
 Olgerd (Algirdas) Prince of Lithuania (r. 1345–1377), 75  
 Oljeitu II-Khan, 23, 33

- oprichnina*  
abolition (1572), 136  
Boris Godunov and, 146  
destructiveness, 132, 137  
elite discipline, 136  
institution, 135  
*oprichniki*, 135, 137  
sack of Novgorod (1570), 132, 136  
Stalin and, 361  
Stalin's purge of 1936–1939  
  compared, 384
- Ordu-Baliq (city), 8  
“organic energy regime”, agriculture and, 233
- Orthodox Church  
Constantinople and, 226  
foundation of Patriarchate (1589), 146  
and Golden Horde, 40  
Judaism and, 211  
Lithuania/Poland, 75, 120, 121  
Metropolitan Peter moves to Moscow (1320's), 83  
Moscow Principality, 83, 85  
Muscovy, 134, 147, 157, 158, 159  
post-Soviet resurgence, 510, 540  
reforms of 1648–1649, 1652, 158  
Rus', 78  
and Russian expansionism, 226, 270  
and Russian nationalism, 224, 225  
and Soviet Union, 395  
Tobolsk Diocese, 179
- Otrepev, Grigorii, Tsar (“false Dmitrii”) (r. 1605–1606), 146
- Ottoman empire  
Anatolia, 73, 119  
capture of Akkerman (1484), 120  
capture of Constantinople (1453), 74  
conquest of Crimean khanate, 74  
control of Black Sea, 120  
Crimean khanate, 73, 76, 111  
defeat by Timur (1402), 74  
emergence and expansion, 73–74  
as Inner Eurasian polity, 119–120  
and Lithuania/Poland, 76, 120  
Muscovy, war with (1676–1681), 161  
Pontic steppes, 120  
Syria, 119
- Outer Eurasia  
empires in sixteenth century, 119  
extent, xxi, xxxiim  
Inner Eurasian geography  
  compared, xxiv  
integration of empires and cultures, 3  
mobilization strategies, 10  
population *see* demography
- Ozbeq, Khan (r. 1313–1341)  
and Black Death (1346), 52  
Gediminas and, 75  
and Ivan Daniilovich, 82  
and Mikhail Yaroslavich, 82  
Muslim faith, 35, 42  
*orda* (ceremonial tent), 35, 40, 41  
*qarachi beys* (council of emirs), 42  
sister, 82  
“Uzbek” people of, 62  
and Yurii Daniilovich, 82
- Pacific region  
global integration after 1500, 97  
human societies in 1250, 3
- pastoralism  
advantages of agriculture over, 77  
Americas, 192  
balance of power with agrarian regions, 18, 77, 114, 145  
after Golden Horde, 71–73  
inherent instability, 7  
livestock, 12  
mobilization, 10, 12  
pastoralist societies in 16th century, 97–114  
*smychka*, 15
- peasants  
migrations, xxiv, 5, 6  
mobilization, xxix, xxxf, 10  
serfdom, 153  
“yoking together” (*smychka*) with proletariat, 15
- Pereiaslav, Treaty of (1654), 160
- perestroika* “restructuring” (Russian)  
collectivization and, 461  
commencement of, 454–463  
concept of, 456, 462  
era of, 454–468, 479, 500, 501, 510  
failure of, 463–468  
and “Komsomol” economy, 518  
Mongolia and, 557, 558  
*nomenklatura* and, 498  
post-1991, 534, 540, 541, 545, 546, 548, 550  
privatization and, 514
- Persia  
agrarian population, 24  
Caucasus and, 213, 215, 251  
cultural influence, 60, 64, 549  
and Golden Horde, 38  
Inner Eurasian campaigns, xxvii, 3, 73  
Khivan raids on, 277, 278  
Mongol conquest, 18, 25, 27, 41
- Mongol rule *see* Il-Khanate as Outer Eurasian polity, xxii, 3, 73  
Rabban Sauma's journey to, 5  
and Russian Empire, 212, 215, 251  
and Soviet Union, 407  
Timur invades (1386, 1392), 58  
trade, 37, 73, 107, 126, 133  
trans-Eurasian contacts, 3  
Transoxiana and, 108, 200
- Peter I (“the Great”), Tsar (r. 1696–1725)  
defeat by Khiva (1717), 169  
economic reforms, 166–167  
Europeanization of nobility, 167–168  
expansionist campaigns, 169  
founds St. Petersburg, 165  
government reforms, 167–168  
India and, 169, 201  
military reforms, 164–165  
overthrows regency of Sophia, 149  
Table of Ranks (1722), 167, 360, 367
- Petlin, Ivan, 101, 180
- plague *see* Black Death
- Poland, *see* Lithuania/Poland
- Politburo (Soviet Union), 359, 378, 383, 387, 442, 453, 456, 496, 558
- Polo, Marco, 5, 9, 12, 26, 28, 251
- Poltava, battle of (1709), 165, 169, 189
- Pontic steppes  
Batu's conquest of (1237–1241), 36  
borderland culture, 127  
Crimean khanate *see* Crimean khanate  
and Eurasian integration, 99  
grain production, 221, 247, 249  
industry, 249, 250  
Kalmyk raids on, 193  
khanates, 110  
and Kievan Rus', 78  
Kucuk Kainarca, treaty of (1774), 212  
migrations, 101, 218  
mobilization, 35  
Muscovite expansion into, 125, 153, 159, 161, 177  
nomadism, 143  
and Ottoman empire, 74, 120  
pastoralism, 119, 175  
region of, xxxii, xxxiiim, 13  
Russian Empire, 169, 210, 211, 212, 215, 217, 221, 270, 271

- slave raids on Lithuania/Poland, 120  
*smychka*, 73  
 Soviet Union, 410  
 trade, 79  
 trade decline, 53  
 Ukraine, 533  
*ulus* of Nogai, 42  
*uluses*, 26  
 population *see* demography  
 Post-Soviet Inner Eurasian Republics (PSIERS) *see* new states after 1991  
 proletariat, “yoking together” (*smychka*) with peasants, 15  
 Putin, Vladimir, 522, 525–526, 537
- Qaidu, Khan (r. 1271–1301), 31–32  
*qarachi beys* (council of emirs), 42  
 Qarshi (Nakshab) (city), 33  
 Qasim Khan *see* Kasim Khan  
 Qayaliq (city), 31  
 Qing dynasty  
   attack on Khabarov expedition (1652), 180  
   claim to Mongolia, 293  
   end (1911), 184, 298, 301  
   foundation (1616), 184  
   last military success, 301  
   rise, 183  
   rule in Mongolia, 293–299  
   rule in Xinjiang, 299–301  
   steppe origins, 183  
 Qo Orlog, Kalmyk leader (*tayishi*), 193
- Qubilai, Khan (r. 1260–1294)  
   aid to Karakorum, 28  
   becomes Khagan, 26  
   conflict with Ariq-Boke, 26  
   defeats Ariq-Boke (1264), 27  
   founds Yuan dynasty, 27  
   maintains Mongol status, 28  
   mobilization strengths, 27  
   and Qaidu, 32  
   Southern China campaign, 18, 26  
   successors, 33
- quriltai* (Mongol council)  
   of 1206 (great *quriltai*), 28, 87  
   of 1246, 9  
   of 1259, 26  
   of 1260, 26  
   of 1364, 57  
   of 1370, 57  
   of 1640, 184, 187  
   allocation of land by, 36  
   decline, 42  
   failure to summon, 33  
   *Khural* and, 421
- Rabban Bar Sauma, 5  
 railways and market driver of growth, 247  
 rainfall and interiority, xxviii  
 Razin, Stenka, 162, 164  
 rent-seeking  
   definition, 460, 498  
   Mongolia, 498  
   Soviet Union, 460  
   as tribute-taking, 460, 498  
   Turkmenistan, 552  
   Uzbekistan, 552  
   Xinjiang, 428
- Riurikid dynasty *see* Muscovy  
 Romanov, Filaret, Metropolitan, 147, 149, 151, 157  
 Romanov, Mikhail, Tsar (r. 1613–1645), 147, 149, 156  
 Romanov dynasty (1613–1917)  
   beginning, 147  
   and Ivan IV, 147  
 Romanova, Anastasia, 135, 147, 213  
 Romanova, Sophia, 149  
 ruling class *see* aristocracies and elites
- Rus’  
   Black Death (1352), 53  
   and Golden Horde, 78–81  
   Mongol invasion, 74, 78, 81, 86, 89, 148, 391, 423, 430  
   Orthodox Church, 78
- Russia  
   expansion shown as logistic curve, 125*f*  
   polities *see* Moscow, Principality of (to 1500); Muscovy (1500 to 1700); Rus’; Russian Empire (1700–1917); Russian Federation (1991–present); Soviet Union (1917–1991)  
 Russian Empire (1700–1917)  
   *For pre-1500 period see* Moscow, Principality of  
   *For pre-1700 period see* Muscovy  
   abolition of serfdom (1861), 243  
   Alaska colony, 289  
   collapse, reasons for, 309–310  
   Crimean War (1854–1856), 225–226, 241  
   defeat by Sweden at Narva (1700), 165, 241  
   defeat of Sweden at Poltava (1709), 165, 169, 189  
   economic and social change after 1850, 245–253  
   economic growth 1750–1850, 217–218  
   economic reforms of Peter the Great, 166–167
- elite discipline, 222–225  
 elite fragmentation after 1850, 254–256  
 eve of World War I, 263–264  
 evolution and expansion, 209–226  
 expansion during early eighteenth century, 168–169  
 expansion during late eighteenth century, 210–214  
 expansion in early nineteenth century, 214–217  
 expansion in late nineteenth century, 269–270, 302  
 expansion under Peter the Great, 169  
 fiscal development 1750–1850, 219–220  
 fossil fuels revolution, 240–241  
 global integration, 1750–1850, 209–210  
*gosudarstvennost* (strong stateism), 324  
 Great Power status, 164–170  
 “Great Reforms” of Alexander II, 242–245  
 greatest extent, 7  
 ideological approach to expansion, 270  
 as Inner Eurasian “heartland”, xxxiii  
 Islam, 216, 273, 282, 283, 284, 301  
 and Kazakh Great Horde, 271, 273  
 Kazakh steppes, expansion into, 196*m*, 197–199, 270–275  
 Kazakhstan, 403–405  
 and market driver of growth, 242, 245, 253  
 military reforms of Peter the Great, 164–165  
 mobilization, early eighteenth century, 164  
 mobilization, fiscal, 219–220  
 mobilization, military, 219–221  
 mobilization, reasons for final collapse, 309–310  
 mobilization, strategies, 11  
 mobilization, strengths, 217  
 mobilization, weaknesses, 241, 256, 293, 302  
 nobility, Europeanization of, 167–168  
 Orthodox Church, 224, 225, 226, 270  
 Persia and, 212, 215, 251  
 political and social crisis 1900–1906, 256–261

- Russian Empire (1700–1917)  
*(Continued)*  
 political changes after 1850, 254–256  
 reason for success, puzzle as to, 10  
 reference to, xxxiii  
 reform dilemmas after Crimean War, 241–242  
 reforms of Alexander II (“Great Reforms”), 242–245  
 reforms of Peter the Great, 167–168  
 reforms of Stolypin 1906–1911, 261–263  
 Revolution of February 1917, 317–326  
 Revolution of October 1917, 326–329  
 rise of, xxii, xxxiii, 164–170  
 Siberia, expansion into, 287–293  
 St. Petersburg becomes new capital (1711), 189  
 Table of Ranks (1722), 167, 360, 367  
 Transoxiana, 108, 196*m*, 269, 272, 273, 275–287, 403–405  
 World War I, 310–317
- Russian Federation (1991–present)  
 consolidation and stabilization 1995–2000, 521–525  
 as Inner Eurasian heartland, 494, 510–512  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494  
 legitimization, 510  
 resurgence of centralism under Putin, 525–527  
 strength, 494, 510  
 transition to market economy 1991–1995, 512–521
- Russo-Japanese War (1904–05)  
 “mobilization pump”, xxx*f*  
 Russian defeat, 258, 269, 292, 302, 311
- Saray  
 Batu’s winter camp, 36  
 Black Death (1346), 52  
 capital city, 9, 39  
 Carpini’s journey to (1246), 41  
 Christian bishopric (1261), 40  
 decline, 54, 58, 72, 90  
 emirs of, 42, 54  
 fur trade, 40, 83  
 Golden Horde revived, 55  
 and “Great Troubles” (1360–1380), 54  
 Islam, 42  
 mobilization center, 36, 40  
 Muscovy and, 86, 126
- New Saray, 42, 53, 394  
 population, 41  
 and Rus’ principalities, 82  
 tax revenues, 40  
 Timur’s sackings (1390, 1395), 55, 58, 62  
 trade, 38, 53  
 tribute-taking, 75, 81  
*ulus*, 36  
 urbanization, 41
- Semirechic region  
 definition, 109, xxxii  
 Giray and Janibek lead migration to (1458), 63  
 grain exports, 286  
 Great Horde, 105, 198  
 Islam, 61  
 Jadidist movement, 404  
 Kazakh control, 63  
 Kyrgyz migration to, 109, 276  
 Kyrgyz-Russian conflict (1916), 405  
 Oirat control, 198  
 pastoralism, 29, 201  
 railways, 356  
 Russian Civil War, 405, 406  
 Russian settlement in, 262, 274, 297  
 Silk Roads, 62, 198  
*smychka*, 29  
 trade, 198
- serfdom (Russia)  
 abolition (1861), 243  
 decree of 1649, 153  
 shamanism, Islam and, 108, 202  
 Shangdu *see* Kaiping
- Shibanid dynasty (1429–1598), 62, 64, 107, 199, 200
- Shuiskii, Vasiliii, Tsar (r. 1606–1610), 147
- Siberia  
 economic development after 1950, 479–480  
 Muscovite conquest, 175–183  
 Russian migration, 287  
 Russian rule 1750–1850, 287–291  
 Russian rule 1850–1914, 291–293  
 Soviet rule, 412–417, 479–480  
*trakt* (Russian road, 1763), 288, 292, 417  
 Trans-Siberian railroad, 292  
 Virgin Lands Program, 480
- Sibir, Khanate of, 176
- Silk Roads  
 decline in trade levels, 32, 53, 108, 203  
 and Eurasian integration, 3  
 gateways to, 100, 186  
 Oirat control, 186, 198
- Pegolotti’s guide (1340), 5  
 routes, xxxii, 37, 62, 186, 198  
 taxation, 62, 65
- Simeon, Prince of Moscow, 53, 84
- Simeon Bekbulatovich, Grand Prince of Rus’ (1575), 136
- slavery, 113, 201, 275, 278, 290
- Smolensk, Muscovite attack on (1632), 151
- smychka* “yoking together” (Russian)  
 agrarian regions, 15, 17, 54, 76–78  
 Americas, 192  
 balance of power within, 18  
 breakdown during 15th century, 61  
 cultural adaptation within, 17  
 and elite discipline, 16  
 forms of agrarian *smychka*, 78*f*  
 mobilization and, 15–18  
 Mongol empire, 23  
 process of, 16*f*  
 regional versions of, 18, 26, 28, 31, 32  
 stability or instability of, 29  
 strengths and weaknesses of, 23  
 tensions within, 16
- Soviet Union (1917–1991)  
 balance of modernity and tradition, 343–344  
 building of socialism, 350–356  
 Civil War 1918–1921, 330–337  
 Cold War, 439  
 collectivization, 367–372  
 command economy, successes, 397–398  
 defeat of Japan in Manchuria (1939), 423  
 destalinization, 440–445  
 economic changes in 1950s, 445–449  
 economic difficulties in late 1920’s, 356–358  
 economic growth and slowdown after 1950, 449–454  
 economic recovery after World War II, 396–397  
 elite discipline, 367  
 industrialization, 367–398  
 Islam, 330, 377, 395, 406, 410, 412  
 Kazakhstan, 405–412, 474–479  
 “Komsomol” economy, 518  
*mestnichestvo*, 478  
 mobilization, efficiency and, 387–390  
 mobilization, industrialization and, 367–368, 372–380

- mobilization, post-World War II, 396–397  
 mobilization, success and decline after 1950, 439–468  
 mobilization, summit of success, 440  
 mobilization, systemic problems after 1950, 449–454  
 mobilizational machine, 380–387  
 New Economic Policy, 344–350  
 new mobilizational order, 337–338, 358–363, 367  
*nomenklatura* *see* *nomenklatura*  
 Orthodox Church, 395  
*perestroika* *see* *perestroika*  
 peripheral regions, control of, 336–337, 403, 432–433, 473–474  
 Persia and, 407  
 Politburo, 359, 378, 383, 387, 442, 453, 456, 496, 558  
 purge of 1936–1939, 384  
 reason for success, puzzle as to, 10  
 reference to, xxxiii  
 rent-seeking, 460  
 Revolution of October 1917, 326–329  
 rise and fall, xxii  
 Siberia, 412–417, 479–480  
*smychka*, 15  
 social changes in 1950s, 445–449  
 Stalinism *see* Stalin, Joseph  
 superpower status, 391–395, 440  
 suppression of religion, 377, 433  
 Transoxiana, 405–412  
 Virgin Lands Program *see* Virgin Lands Program  
 World War II (“Great Patriotic War”), 391–395  
 Xinjiang and, 431–432  
 spelling conventions in book, xxxiv  
 St. Petersburg  
   Academy of Sciences (1724), 167  
   becomes Russian capital, 165  
   foundation, 165  
   name changes, xxxiv  
   railways, 240  
   Revolution of 1905, 258  
 Stalin, Joseph  
   Chinggis Khan compared, 357, 378, 387  
   collectivization policy, 367–372  
   death (1953), 396, 397, 440  
   destalinization, 440–445  
   industrialization policy, 367  
   mental and physical decline, 396–397  
   mobilizational machine, 380–387  
   and Mongolia, 423, 426  
   and *oprichnina*, 361, 384  
   World War II, 391–395  
 state formation  
   after 1991 *see* new states after 1991  
   agrarian regions, 10, 16  
   steppes  
     mobilization strategies, 12–15  
     population growth, 6  
     regions, xxxii  
 Stolypin, P. A., 261–263  
*strel'tsy* “musketeers” (Muscovy)  
   foundation (1550), 132  
   revolt (1698), 165  
 Stroganov family of merchants, 176, 219  
 Sufism  
   influence of, 60, 104, 107, 108, 110, 201, 283  
   *khwajas* (teachers), 109, 110, 201  
   mobilization potential, 61  
   Naqshbandiyya order, 60, 103, 108, 216  
   trade, 110  
   Yasawiyya order, 63  
 Sultan Tawke (r. 1680–1715), 198  
 Sweden  
   defeated by Peter the Great at Poltava (1709), 165, 169, 189  
   defeats Peter the Great at Narva (1700), 165, 241  
   Livonia War with Muscovy (1590), 146  
   truce with Muscovy (1617), 149  
 synoptic history, xxiii  
 Syria  
   Damascus *see* Damascus  
   Ottoman rule, 119  
   Saray and, 41  
   Timur invades (1399), 15, 58  
 Table of Ranks (Russian Empire), 167, 360, 367  
 Tajikistan  
   independence after 1991, 543–554  
   as Inner Eurasian polity, 494  
 Talas (city), 29, 32, 192, 198  
 Tamerlane *see* Timur  
 Tana (Azov) (seaport), 38  
 Tarim basin, oases, 29  
 Tarmashirin, Khan (r. 1326–1334), 33, 56  
 Taulkel Khan (r. 1586–1598), 105, 186  
 Temriuk Aidar, Prince of Circassians, 213  
 Temujin *see* Chinggis Khan  
 Temür, Khan, 33  
 Tersk, Muscovite fort at (1567), 127, 213  
 Tibetan (Yellow Hat) Buddhism *see* Buddhism  
 Time of Troubles (1598–1603), 145–147  
 Timur (Emir Timur, Tamerlane) (r. 1370–1405)  
   birth (c. 1336), 56  
   campaigns, 58  
   capital city (Samarkand), 58, 59  
   Chagatay ulus reunified, 34  
   Chinggis Khan compared, 56, 57  
   death (1405), 58, 59  
   Edigu and, 54  
   elite discipline, 15, 34, 57  
   emir of Transoxiana (1370), 57  
   firearms used, 88  
   Golden Horde devastated, 53, 71  
   Khorezm destroyed (1388), 37  
   the “lame” (*Aqsaq Timur*), 56  
   leadership strengths, 61  
   Lenin compared, 334  
   as mobilizer, 55, 57  
   Ottomans defeated (1402), 74  
   Persia invaded (1386, 1392), 58  
   reign, 55–61, 105  
   rise, 56  
   Saray sacked (1390, 1395), 55, 58, 62  
   *smychka*, 55, 56, 59  
   Stalin compared, 361, 362, 441  
   successors, 59, 62  
   Toqtamish and, 54, 55, 58, 62  
   and Tughlugh-Temur, 57  
   *uymaq* (entourage, retinue), 56  
   and Uzbekistan nationalism, 547  
 Tiumen’ (city), 62  
 Tiumen’ region, 176, 288, 417, 450, 451, 516  
 Tobolsk  
   Diocese of, 179  
   fort at (1601), 177  
   slavery, 290  
   trade, 198, 290  
   *wakt* and, 288  
 Tode-Menghu, Khan (r. 1280–1287), 35, 41  
 Tomsk, fort at (1604), 177  
 topography, Inner Eurasian distinctiveness, xxvii  
 Toqta, Khan (r. 1291–1312), 42  
 Toqtamish, Khan  
   Algirdas and, 75  
   captures Saray (1376, 1380), 54  
   defeats Mamaq (1381), 55  
   flees to Lithuania, 55, 58  
   raids Moscow (1382), 55  
   reunites Golden Horde, 55

- Toqtamish, Khan (*Continued*)  
 sacks Moscow (1382), 84, 88  
 successors, 72  
 Timur defeats (1390, 1395), 55, 62  
 Timur supports, 54  
 Vitautas and, 75
- trade  
 Afro-Eurasian trade circuits  
   pre-1500, 4*m*  
   with Americas, 74, 155  
 and Eurasian integration, 3
- trakt* (Russian road through Siberia, 1763), 288, 292, 417
- Transoxiana  
 Central Asia designation, 543  
 as centre of khanate rule, 33  
 change during 1600–1750, 199–203  
 definition, xxxii  
 ecology, 29  
 Ibn Battuta's journey to, 33  
 invasion by Tughlugh-Temur (1360), 57  
 Islam, 33  
 Khanates before Russian conquest, 275–278  
*mahallas*, 282  
*maliks* (local kings), 32  
 Mas'ud Beg governor of, 10, 30, 31, 32  
 mobilization, 57, 62, 64, 106, 107  
 oases, 29, 106  
 Persia and, 108, 200  
 population growth, 108  
 Qaidu Khanate, 32  
 and *quriltai* of 1246, 10  
 region, xxxiii*m*, 34  
 regional dynasties after Shibaniid rule, 199, 275  
 regions of, 544*m*  
 Russian conquest, 108, 196*m*, 269, 272, 273, 275, 278–282  
 Russian migration, 262  
 Russian rule, 282–287, 403, 403–405  
 secretariat, 18  
 Shibaniid rule, 64, 107, 108, 199  
*smychka*, 33, 55, 56  
 Soviet rule, 405–412, 476, 477, 478  
 Sufism, 108  
 Timur emir of (1370), 57  
 trade, 108  
 Turkic language, 64, 108  
*ulus* of Jochi and Batu, 34  
 urbanization, 62, 106, 108, 175  
 Uzbek settlement in, 64, 106, 107
- transport *see* caravans; railways
- Trans-Siberian railroad, 292
- travel, trans-Eurasian, 5
- tribute-taking  
 mobilization as, xxix, 14  
 rent-seeking as, 460, 498  
 secretariats, 18
- Trotsky, Leon, 259, 310, 326, 327–328, 330, 332–334, 345, 352, 359–361, 378, 382, 462
- Tughlugh-Temur, Khan (r. 1347–1363), 34, 57
- Tula  
 armaments factories, 151, 167, 214, 387  
 fortified lines, 128
- Turkmenistan  
 independence after 1991, 543–554  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494  
 rent-seeking, 552
- Turukhansk, fort at (1607), 178
- Tver'  
 conquered by Moscow (1485), 86  
 decline, 85  
 defeat by Muscovy, 55  
 defeats Moscow (1317), 82  
 Dmitrii Mikhailovich Grand Prince of (1322), 82  
 escape from Mongol invasion, 39  
 firearms production, 88  
 Lithuania and, 76, 82  
 Mikhail Yaroslavich Grand Prince of (1304), 82  
 rise of, 71, 81, 82  
 Russian province of, 243, 343  
 sack of (1327), 82  
 strategic position, 81
- Ugrian lands, Muscovite conquest of (1499), 90
- Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, 486
- Uighur Empire, 8
- Uighur kingdom, 431
- Uighuristan  
 definition, xxxii  
 Mongol raids on, 32
- Ukraine  
 independence after 1991, 532–539  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494  
 Khmel'nitskii revolt (1648), 151, 152, 159, 185  
 Kiev *see* Kiev; Kievan Rus'
- Ulugh (Muhammad) Beg (r. 1411–1449), 59, 62, 72, 84, 85
- Ulus* of Batu, 35, 37, 41
- Ulus* of Chagatay *see* Chagatay Khanate
- United Kingdom *see* Britain
- United States  
 Alaska purchase (1867), 289  
 and Comanche Empire, 192  
 unity and elite discipline, 133
- Urals  
 iron production begins (1630), 151  
 Russian expansion, 195–197
- urban areas, urbanization  
 aristocracies and elites, 34  
 in Central Asia, xxxii
- Uzbek dynasty  
 expansion, 86  
 foundation, xxiv  
 rulers of Transoxiana, 107  
 strength, 106
- Uzbek steppes  
 lands of, 105  
 mobilization, 61–64
- Uzbekistan  
 contribution to Soviet economy, 473, 476  
 independence after 1991, 408, 543–554  
 as Inner Eurasian polity, 494  
 rent-seeking, 552  
 Soviet Republic of, 348, 408, 411, 412, 454, 477  
 urbanization, 479
- Vasilii I, Prince of Moscow (r. 1389–1425), 75, 84
- Vasilii II, Grand Prince of Moscow (r. 1425–1462), 85, 87, 147
- Vasilii III, Grand Prince of Moscow (r. 1505–1533), 85–87, 89, 111, 125, 127, 135
- Vilnius, 74, 76, 121
- Virgin Lands Program (Soviet Union)  
 commencement (1954), 274, 443  
 failure, 445  
 impact, 474, 480  
 introduction of, 274  
 Mongolian version, 483
- Vitautas, Grand Duke of Lithuania (r. 1392–1430), 72, 75, 84
- Vladimir  
 Alexander Nevskii Grand Prince of, 40, 81, 82  
 capital city, 39, 78

- and Lithuania/Poland, 76  
Mongol invasion, 39, 81  
Vogul lands, Muscovite conquest of (1499), 90  
Vorskla river, battle of (1399), 75
- weather *see* climate
- William of Rubruck, 9, 12, 18, 30, 31, 36, 41
- Winius, Andries, 151
- world empires, largest, *xxix*  
world history *see* history, historiography
- Xanadu *see* Kaiping
- Xinjiang  
Chinese Communist rule, 432, 486–489  
Chinese rule 1750–1900, 299–301  
definition, *xxxii*  
economic development after 1991, 554–557  
“Moghulistan”, *xxxii*  
rent-seeking, 428  
*smychka*, 28  
Soviet influence, 431–432  
Uighur Autonomous Region (1955), 486  
warlord rule 1911–1949, 427–432
- Yadigarid dynasty (Khorezm, est. 1515), 107, 200
- Yakutsk (city)  
“Committee of Public Safety” (1918), 414  
foundation (1632), 178  
Khabarov expedition to Amur river (1650’s), 180  
slavery, 290
- Yasa* (Mongol law code), 33, 105  
Yasawiyya Sufi order, 63  
Yellow Hat (Tibetan) Buddhism *see* Buddhism  
Yeltsin, Boris, 465–467, 512–514, 517, 519–525, 541
- Yuan dynasty  
“Bureau of Pacification”, 32  
collapse (1368), 28, 53, 65, 102  
foundation (1271), 27  
last representative, 184  
and Mongol empire, 26–28  
Mongolia after, 65–66  
Mongolia during, 27  
as northern dynasty, 184  
rule in Xinjiang, 192  
withdrawal from Central Asia (late 1280’s), 32
- Yurii Daniilovich, Grand Prince of Moscow (1316), 82
- Zanabazar, Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, 185, 187, 296  
*Zemskii Sobor* “Assembly of the Land” (Muscovite)  
of 1556, 135  
of 1612, 147  
Catherine the Great and, 222  
end (1683), 157  
*Zhetý Zhargý* (Kazakh code of laws), 198
- Zunghar Empire  
aftermath of destruction of, 194, 240, 271, 277, 293, 299  
attacks on Kazakhs (1698, 1723), 189  
capital city, 300  
Comanche Empire compared, 192  
defeat by China (1696), 188  
description of 1718 battle with China, 189  
destruction by China/Khalkha alliance (1755–1758), 183, 191  
foundation, 180, 187  
Galdan’s reign, 187  
invades eastern Mongolia (1688), 185, 187  
invades Xinjiang (1713), 189  
Muscovy and, 180, 181  
recovery under Tsewang Rabtan (1697–1727), 188  
rise of, 184  
and Russian Empire, 189  
Tibet conflict with China (1720), 189  
Zungharian lands, 62
- Zungharia  
agriculture, 186  
Alghu Khanate, 31  
Chagatay Khanate, 30  
Chinese conquest *see* Zunghar Empire  
definition, *xxxii*  
devastation, 30  
Islam, 61  
Kalmyk migration to (1771), 194  
Moghulistan, 34  
nomad incursions, 109  
Oirat rule *see* Oirat; Zunghar Empire  
pastoralism, 29  
region, 109  
revolt against Tarmashirin (1334), 33  
*smychka*, 29  
steppes, 34  
trade, 180, 181, 186, 187, 189, 198  
and Xinjiang, 201



